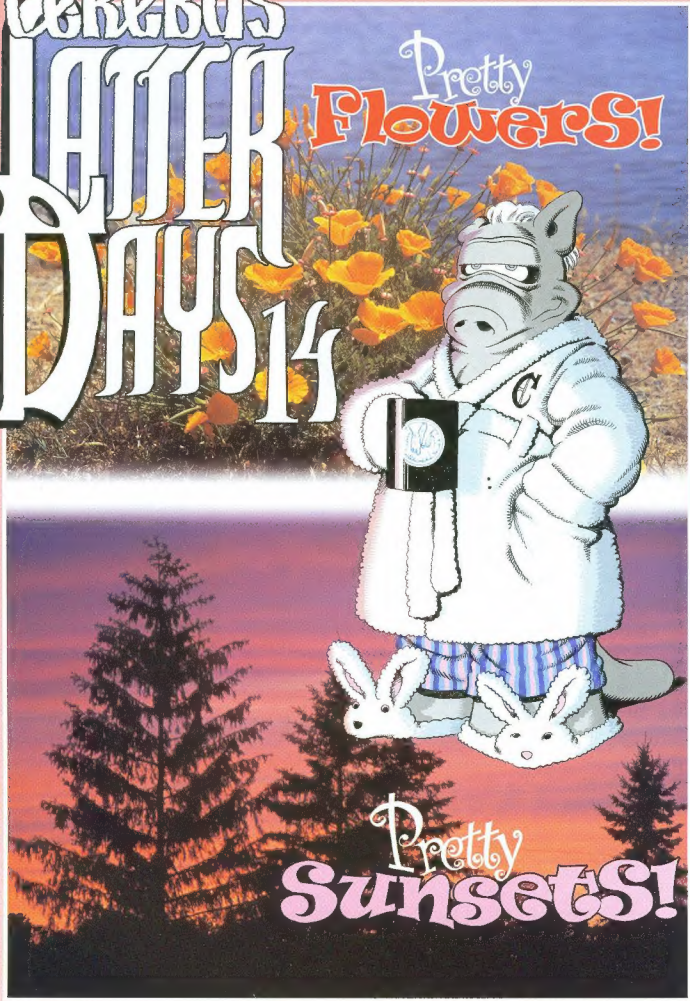
ISSN 0712-7774

CEREBUS LATTER DAYS 14



279
JUN

CEREBUS

NO. 279 JUNE 2002

DAVE SIM
Creator, Writer
Characters/
pencil & ink,
mechanical tones,
lettering

GERHARD
Background
Artist/pencil & ink

CHRIS VERHOEVEN
Cover Technician

TRACY REID
Cover Photos

LATTER DAYS

•

PROLOGUE
(Cerebus 266
and 267)

•

BOOK ONE
(Cerebus 268 to
288)

•

BOOK TWO
(Cerebus 289 to
300)

P·R·E·N·E·Y
PRINT & LITHO INC.

For as little as $1,026 u.s. . . .
. . . we can print 2,000 copies of a
comic book exactly like the one you're
holding right now!

Cover: 70 lb coated, 4-colour one side,
black & white inside covers.
Inside Pages: 32 pages, standard newsprint,
black & white throughout.
Art supplied on disk with hard copy. Shipping extra.

Other options available. Call for details.

For information, please call 1-877-870-4164
or e-mail kim@preneyprint.com

PUBLISHED MONTHLY BY
AARDVARK-VANAHEIM INC.
P.O. BOX 1674, STATION C
KITCHENER, ON N2G 4R2

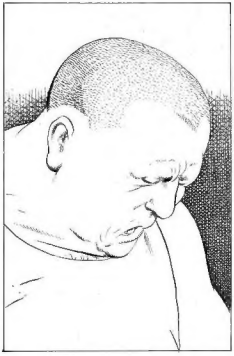
ALL CONTENTS ©2001
DAVE SIM AND GERHARD

PRINTED IN CANADA BY
PRENEY PRINT & LITHO INC.
WINDSOR, ONTARIO

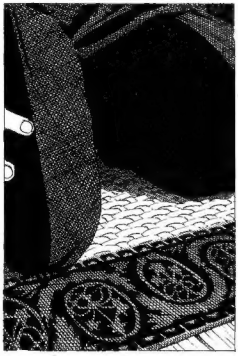
IT WAS MOSHIE WHO TOLD CERBELUS.

"BABE WAS SITTING IN A CHAIR..."

(THAT WAS THE ONLY TIME CERBELUS HEARD MOSHIE USE THE NICKNAME HE HAD FOR JEROME WHEN THEY WERE BOYS.)



"HIS MOUTH BECAME DISTORTED ...AND WHEN HE GOT UP FROM THE CHAIR..."



"...HE FELL TO HIS KNEES..."

(IT WAS ALSO THE ONLY TIME CEREBUS HEARD MOSHE NOT USE THE "BOOK OF KOOK" LANGUAGE)

CEREBUS WAS SURPRISED WHEN JEROME'S HAIR STARTED GROWING BACK IN.

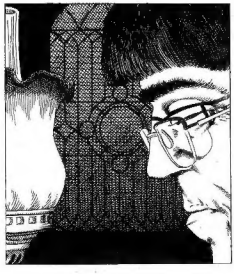
(CEREBUS HADN'T KNOWN THAT HE HAD BEEN SHAVING IT OFF ALL ALONG)

AND EVEN *MORE* SURPRISED WHEN JEROME GOT MARRIED ..FOR THE FOURTH *TIME!*

(CEREBUS HADN'T KNOWN THAT HE HAD BEEN MARRIED EVEN *ONCE*)

HIS WIFE'S NAME WAS VALERIE. (LATER

IN THE YEAR EIGHTEEN)



MOSHIE SENT HIM A LETTER.

"DEAR BRO. BABE." (IT READ)

"I TRUST YOU ARE FEELING BETTER AT THIS WRITING."

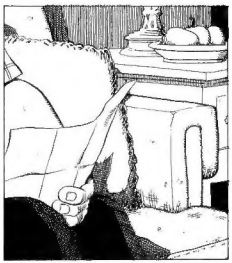
"IT MIGHT ENCOURAGE YOU AND— IN A WAY— DELIGHT YOU TO KNOW THAT BROTHER SHEM WAS AGREEABLE TO STEP INTO YOUR BOOTS."

("DELIGHT YOU?" THOUGHT CERBERUS.)

"UNTIL SUCH TIME AS YOU ARE WELL ENOUGH TO RETURN TO THE TZIO."

"IT MAY FURTHER DELIGHT YOU TO KNOW THAT I HAVE MADE ARRANGEMENTS WITH SHEM AND LOSHE SO THAT, DURING YOUR ILLNESS YOU WILL RECEIVE 150 CROWNS A WEEK TO ASSIST YOU."

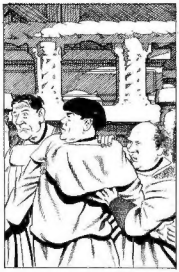
"FOR A TIME."



"TOWARDS THE EXTRAORDINARY MEDICAL EXPENSES THAT YOU HAVE AND ARE STILL INCURRING."

"AND FURTHER"

"IN VIEW OF THE FACT THAT SHEM IS NOW OPERATING WITH US IN YOUR PLACE"



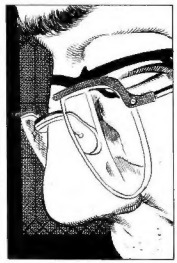
"I WILL NEED FROM YOU, BY YOUR SIGNATURE UNDERNEATH ATTESTING TO THE FACT THAT YOU GAVE ME"

"AS OWNER OF THE THREE WISE FELLOWS"

"THE PERPETUAL RIGHTS TO USE PICTURES OF YOUR FACE FOR ALL FUTURE ADVERTISING, COMMERCIAL TIE-INS, MERCHANDISING"

" AND ANY OTHER WAY NEEDED AND THE RIGHT TO ASSIGN THESE RIGHTS TO OTHERS IF AND WHEN THE NEED MAY ARISE."

"LOSHIE AND I MISS YOU VERY MUCH AND WE ARE HOPING AND PRAYING."

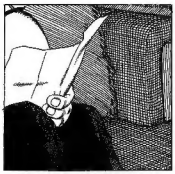


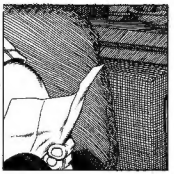
"TO HAVE YOU BACK WITH US SOON NOW."

"BABE, PLEASE SIGN YOUR NAME TO THE BOTTOM, SIGNIFYING YOUR ACCEPTANCE OF MY USING YOUR FACE FOR THE PURPOSES I HAVE STATED ABOVE."

"I HOPE YOU WILL SOON BE WELL ENOUGH SO THAT WE CAN BE TOGETHER AGAIN."

"YOUR LOVING BROTHER, MOSHER."



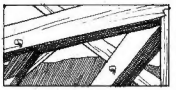


skish

skish skish

skish skish skish

Jerry Howard



THA'S

THAT WAS WHEN CERBERUS

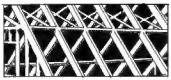
STOPPED

GOING TO WATCH

MOSHIE

BUILDING HOUSES.

BY THE YEAR TWENTY



THE PAYMENTS HAD DWINDLED.

"I FELT AT THAT TIME"

(MOSHIE SAID)

"THAT I COULDN'T AFFORD TO MAKE SUCH WEEKLY PAYMENTS."

"SHEM STOPPED SOONER THAN I DID."

"AND SO DID LOSHIE."

SHEM QUICKLY FIT IN...

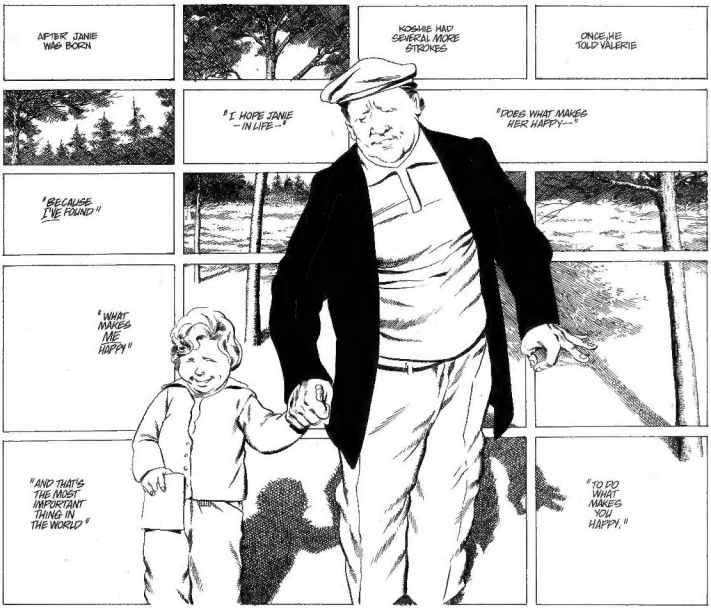
EVEN THOUGH HE HAD BEEN AWAY FOR FIFTEEN YEARS.

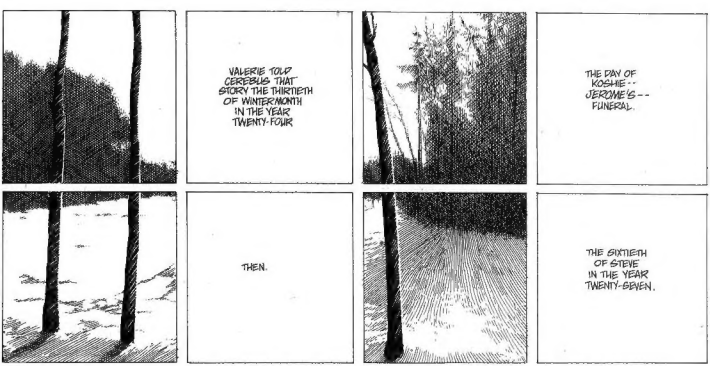
(SHEM HAD BEEN THE ORIGINAL THIRD WISE FELLOW--BEFORE KOSHIE.)

(CEREBUS HADN'T KNOWN THAT.)

JEROME AND VALERIE HAD A BABY GIRL.

THEY NAMED JANIE.


AFTER JANIE WAS BORN
KOSHIE HAD SEVERAL MORE STROKES
ONCE, HE TOLD VALERIE
"I HOPE JANIE —IN LIFE—"
"DOES WHAT MAKES HER HAPPY—"
"BECAUSE I'VE FOUND"
"WHAT MAKES ME HAPPY"
"AND THAT'S THE MOST IMPORTANT THING IN THE WORLD."
"TO DO WHAT MAKES YOU HAPPY."


VALERIE TOLD CERBERUS THAT STORY THE THIRTIETH OF WINTERMONTH IN THE YEAR TWENTY-FOUR
THE DAY OF KOSHIE— JEROME'S— FUNERAL.
THEN.
THE SIXTIETH OF STEVE IN THE YEAR TWENTY-SEVEN.

SHEM DIED.

ON THE EIGHTIETH OF STEVE, MOSHIE SENT LOSHIE A LETTER.

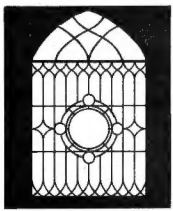
"IT IS HEREBY UNDERSTOOD AND AGREED BETWEEN US THAT I AM TO HAVE THE SOLE AND FINAL SAY IN THE SELECTION OF ANY NEW BROTHER THAT MIGHT BE ASKED TO JOIN WITH US AS A 'THIRD WISE FELLOW' IN THE COMBINATION KNOWN AS 'THE THREE WISE FELLOWS.' THIS IS, IN NO WAY, ANY REFLECTION ON YOUR PROFESSIONAL KNOWLEDGE OF TALENT VALUES, BUT MERELY A REITERATION OF CLAUSE 6 OF AN AGREEMENT DRAWN BETWEEN US IN THE YEAR SIX (THIS WAS THE FIRST CEREBELLI HEARD ABOUT THAT) AND WHICH IS STILL IN FORCE, WHICH EXPRESSES THE FACT THAT I AM THE SOLE OWNER OF THE NAME 'THE THREE WISE FELLOWS' AND THE MANAGER OF THE ACT AND DO ALL BUSINESS AND SIGN ALL CONTRACTS FOR 'THE THREE WISE FELLOWS' WHICH, AS YOU KNOW, HAS WORKED SO AMICABLY AND SO SUCCESSFULLY OVER THESE MANY YEARS.
"IT IS FURTHER ACKNOWLEDGED THAT YOU REST, AS IN THE PAST, ON MY GOOD BUSINESS JUDGEMENT TO FINALIZE ALL DEALS PERTAINING TO 'THE THREE WISE FELLOWS.' THIS DOES NOT IN ANY WAY MEAN THAT I WILL NOT CONSULT WITH YOU ON ALL MAJOR PROBLEMS THAT ARISE. YOUR SIGNATURE UNDER MINE WILL SIGNIFY YOUR AGREEMENT AND ACCEPTANCE OF THE ABOVE."

LOSHIE NEVER SIGNED IT.

THE LEGION OF SUBSTITUTE WISE FELLOWS VOTED FIVE-TO-FOUR TO MAKE ONE OF THEIR OWN -- JOE SCHLIMMER -- THE NEW "THIRD WISE FELLOW."

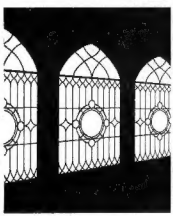
CEREBELLI ENDORSED THE VOTE.

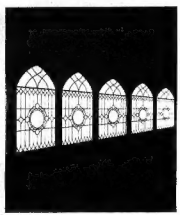
BASICALLY JUST TO PISS MOSHIER OFF.



OF COURSE THERE WAS NO REAL NEED FOR THE THREE WISE FELLOWS BY THEN

CEREBELLI HAD NINE SUBSTITUTE WISE FELLOWS TO TAKE CARE OF EVERYTHING.





THAT DIDN'T STOP MOSHIE OF COURSE

WHEN BOWLINMIER LEFT

HE BROUGHT IN "KOSHIE JOE"

SERIOUSLY "KOSHIE JOE"

IN THE YEAR THIRTY-NINE LOSHIE'S WIFE MABEL DIED

AND IN THE YEAR FORTY ONE, LOSHIE HAD HIS STROKE AND RETIRED.

THEN HE HAD A SECOND STROKE IN FORTY-SIX

AND - TWO MONTHS LATER - A MASSIVE STROKE THAT PUT HIM IN A COMA

TWO WEEKS LATER, LOSHIE DIED

TWENTY-SIXTH OF WINTERMONTH IN FORTY-SEVEN

MOSHIE IMMEDIATELY STARTED LOOKING FOR A REPLACEMENT

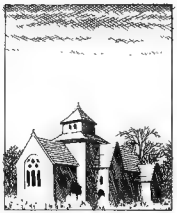
NYUCK! NYUCK! NYUCK!

HEH HEH HEH THAT'S NOT TRUE .. WELL ... HEH... NOT ENTIRELY TRUE, ANYWAY

WORD GOT AROUND THAT MOSHIE HAD LUNG CANCER. SO SOMEONE SUGGESTED

WE SHOULD HAVE A TRIBUTE TO THE "LAST OF THE ORIGINAL WISE FELLOWS"

MOSHIE DIDN'T TRAVEL WELL BY THEN, SO IT WAS DECIDED TO HOLD THE EVENT AT THE CLOSEST SANCTUARY TO HIS STRONG-HOLD



(WHICH - COINCIDENTALLY - TURNED OUT TO BE THE SANCTUARY THAT HOUSED KOSHIE'S "ANGEL ASTONIED AT THE PROMISE OF A HOUSE" ALTARPIECE)

(AT LEAST, IT DID UNTIL CERBERUS HAD THEM BRING IT HERE NYUCK NYUCK NYUCK)

SEVERAL HUNDRED PEOPLE SHOWED UP. THE ANGELS MADE A TON OF FOOD. BALLOONS. THE WHOLE BIT. WHEN MOSHIE CAME IN

EVERYONE STARTED APPLAUDING LIKE CRAZY!!

BUT HE WAS MOVING SO SLOW...BY THE TIME THEY GOT HIM TO THE FRONT...

THE APPLAUSE HAD STOPPED

AND...WORSE THAN THAT...MOSHIE JUST

STOOD THERE

LOOKING LOST...

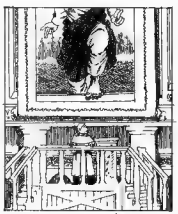
.....SLOWLY.....

SLOWLY... MOSHIE TURNED

AND LOOKED UP AT THE WALL.....TO HIS LEFT...

THEN.....

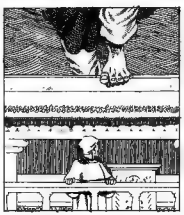
.....SLOWLY



...SLOWLY... MOSHIE TURNED

AND LOOKED UP AT THE WALL

BEHIND HIM.



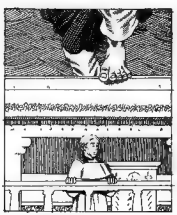
EVERYONE'S THINKING THE SAME THING. "HE'S SENILE! POOR MOSHIER! HE DOESN'T EVEN KNOW WHERE HE IS."

CERBERUS WAS SQUIRMING IN HIS SEAT, TRYING TO FIGURE THE LEAST EMBARRASSING WAY TO GET MOSHIER DOWN FROM THE BOXES OF UNFINISHED WOOD

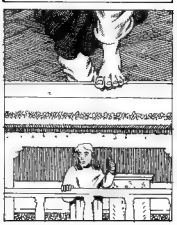
CERBERUS WAS JUST ABOUT TO GO UP HIMSELF

WHEN MOSHIER TURNS SLOWLY BACK AROUND

AND SAYS



"I WAS JUST WONDERING."



"...WHICH ONE OF THESE LOVELY TAPESTRIES IS ELLIE WHATS-ER-NAME'S AMAZING ABS HIDING BEHIND?"

LAUGH?!? CERBERUS HAS NEVER LAUGHED SO HARD! CERBERUS HAS NEVER HEARD PEOPLE LAUGH THAT HARD!! 'TIL OUR SIDES ACHED!!

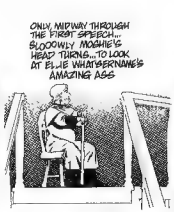
ROLL UP THE TAPESTRY!!

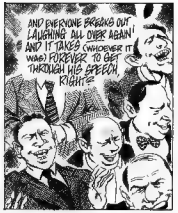
(CERBERUS WAS SIGNALLING)

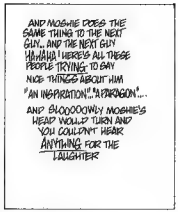
ROLL UP THE TAPESTRY!!

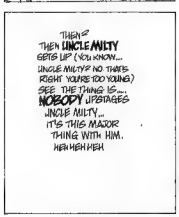
(FINALLY SOMEONE SAW CERBERUS SIGNALLING AND ROLLED UP THE TAPESTRY!)

SO THEN SOMEBODY GETS MOSHE A CHAIR AND THEY START THE SPEECHES AND PRESENTATIONS, SEE?

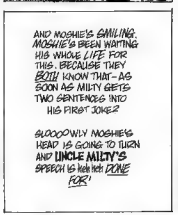

ONLY, MIDWAY THROUGH THE FIRST SPEECH... BLOOOWLY MOSHE'S HEAD TURNS...TO LOOK AT EL...IE WHATSERNAME'S AMAZING ASS

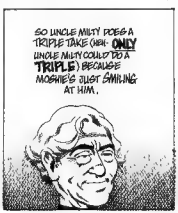

AND EVERYONE BREAKS OUT LAUGHING ALL OVER AGAIN! AND IT TAKES (WHOEVER IT WAS) FOREVER TO GET THROUGH HIS SPEECH, RIGHT?


AND MOSHE DOES THE SAME THING TO THE NEXT GUY... AND THE NEXT GUY. HAHAHA! HERE'S ALL THESE PEOPLE TRYING TO SAY NICE THINGS ABOUT HIM "AN INSPIRATION", "A PARAGON"... AND BLOOOOWLY MOSHE'S HEAD WOULD TURN AND YOU COULDN'T HEAR ANYTHING FOR THE LAUGHTER


THEN? THEN UNCLE MILTY GETS UP! (YOU KNOW... UNCLE MILTY? NO THAT'S RIGHT YOU'RE TOO YOUNG) SEE THE THING IS... NOBODY UPSTAGES UNCLE MILTY... IT'S THIS MAJOR THING WITH HIM. HEH HEH HEH

SO UNCLE MILTY PULLS OUT HIS SPEECH


AND MOSHE'S SMILING. MOSHE'S BEEN WAITING HIS WHOLE LIFE FOR THIS. BECAUSE THEY BOTH KNOW THAT- AS SOON AS MILTY GETS TWO SENTENCES INTO HIS FIRST JOKE?
BLOOOOWLY MOSHE'S HEAD IS GOING TO TURN AND UNCLE MILTY'S SPEECH IS NOW NOT DONE FOR!


SO UNCLE MILTY DOES A TRIPLE TAKE! OH! ONLY UNCLE MILTY COULD DO A TRIPLE! BECAUSE MOSHE'S JUST SMILING AT HIM.

SO HEH-HEH UNCLE MILTY SMILES BACK AT HIM.. AND THEN HE..WIGGLES HIS EYEBROWS A BIT.. AND HE MAKES A KISSY-FACE.. AND MOSHE?.. HEH HEH MOSHE DOESN'T BUDGE AN INCH. HE JUST SITS THERE..WAITING FOR UNCLE MILTY TO START HIS SPEECH. SO NOW IT'S A STARING-AND-SMILING CONTEST, RIGHT? AND EVERYONE IS QUIETLY LAUGHING AND HOLDING THEIR BREATH AT THE SAME TIME. AND THEN EVERYONE COULD SEE THAT UNCLE MILTY'S MOUTH WAS TWITCHING A BIT... AND THEN YOU COULD SEE HIS WHOLE UPPER BODY STARTING TO VIBRATE FROM TRYING NOT TO LAUGH.. FINALLY

FINALLY UNCLE MILTY THROWS HIS SPEECH UP IN THE AIR AND YELLS:

HECK, MOSH! I'M STAHVING. HOW ABOUT YOU?

AND THEN UNCLE MILTY RUNS OVER PICKS MOSHER UP IN HIS ARMS AND CARRIES HIM DOWN TO THE BUFFET TABLE!

THAT'S IT FOR THE SPEECHES AND THE PRESENTATIONS!
THE WINE STARTS FLOWING AND
AND

HEH. GUESS YOU HAD TO BE THERE

TWO DAYS LATER,

THE FORTY SECOND OF SPRING-MONTH IN FORTY-SEVEN

MOSHE DIED IN HIS SLEEP

THIS IS GOING TO SOUND STRANGE, BUT IT WAS ONLY AFTER MOSHER DIED THAT CEREBUS **REALIZED** HE DIDN'T HAVE ANY FRIENDS NOT THAT MOSHER HAD **BEEN** A FRIEND-- (AFTER HE HAD SENT THOSE LETTERS TO KOSHIE AND LOSHIE? CEREBUS COULD BARELY STAND THE SIGHT OF HIM). BUT, AFTER HE DIED CEREBUS REALIZED THAT HE COULDN'T HAVE TOLD YOU THE NAME OF A SINGLE ONE OF THE "LEGION OF SUBSTITUTE WISE FELLOWS"

(HEH-HEH CEREBUS *STILL* CAN'T)

AND THEN CEREBUS TRIED TO REMEMBER THE LAST TIME HE HAD KNOWN *ANYONE'S* NAME. THE *FIRST* SANCTUARY? MARTY, BEAR, PRINCE MICK, Alec, RICHARD GEORGE, HARRISON STARKEY, MRS. SNATCHER. IT WAS STRANGE TO SEE *ANYONE* WHOSE NAME CEREBUS DIDN'T KNOW. BUT *THEN* CEREBUS SPENT THIRTY YEARS IN NORTHERN ISSHURIA IN *DOZENS* OF TAVERNS -- AND HE COULDN'T TELL YOU A SINGLE NAME OF A SINGLE PERSON HE MET -- APART FROM PAUL "COFFEE" ANAN ("THE OWNER OF MCBEES" Heh-heh -- IF YOU WANT TO CALL THAT "REMEMBERING SOMEONE'S NAME")

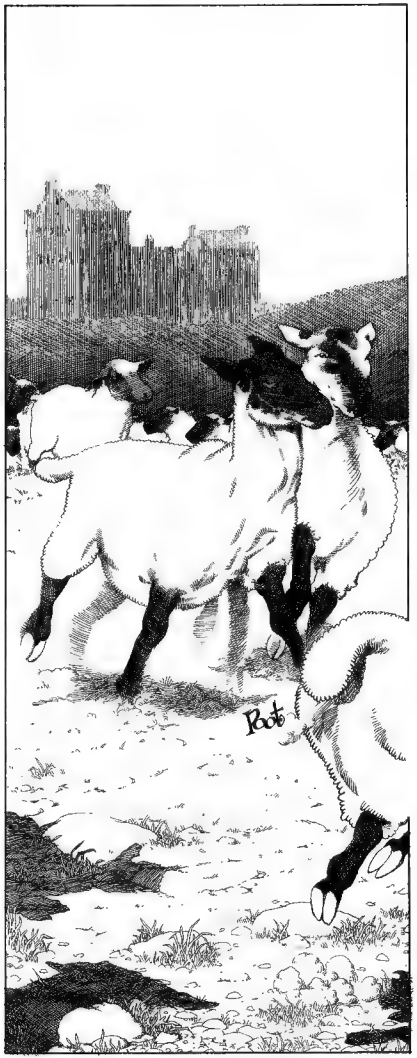
SEE

IT'S NOT THAT PEOPLE DIDN'T *LIKE* CEREBUS. MOST OF THE TIME? WHEN CEREBUS WENT TO WATCH A HOUSE BEING BUILT? SOME ONE WOULD COME OVER AND STRIKE UP A CONVERSATION AND WHEN THEY LEFT? THEY'D SAY "IT WAS NICE TALKING WITH YOU" IN A WAY THAT CEREBUS COULD TELL THAT THEY REALLY *MEANT* IT. BUT THE THING WAS: CEREBUS WAS **NEVER** THE ONE TO STRIKE UP THE CONVERSATION.... AND? FOR THE **LIFE** OF HIM, CEREBUS heh-heh CEREBUS COULD **NEVER** FIGURE OUT **WHAT** (EXACTLY) HAD BEEN SO PAINED "NICE" ABOUT TALKING WITH HIM!

NOW? NOW CEREBUS IS AT AN AGE WHERE IT DOESN'T BOTHER HIM, YOU GET OLD AND YOU FINALLY LEARN THAT IS JUST HOW I AM.... IT'S NO BIG **TSUMMES.**

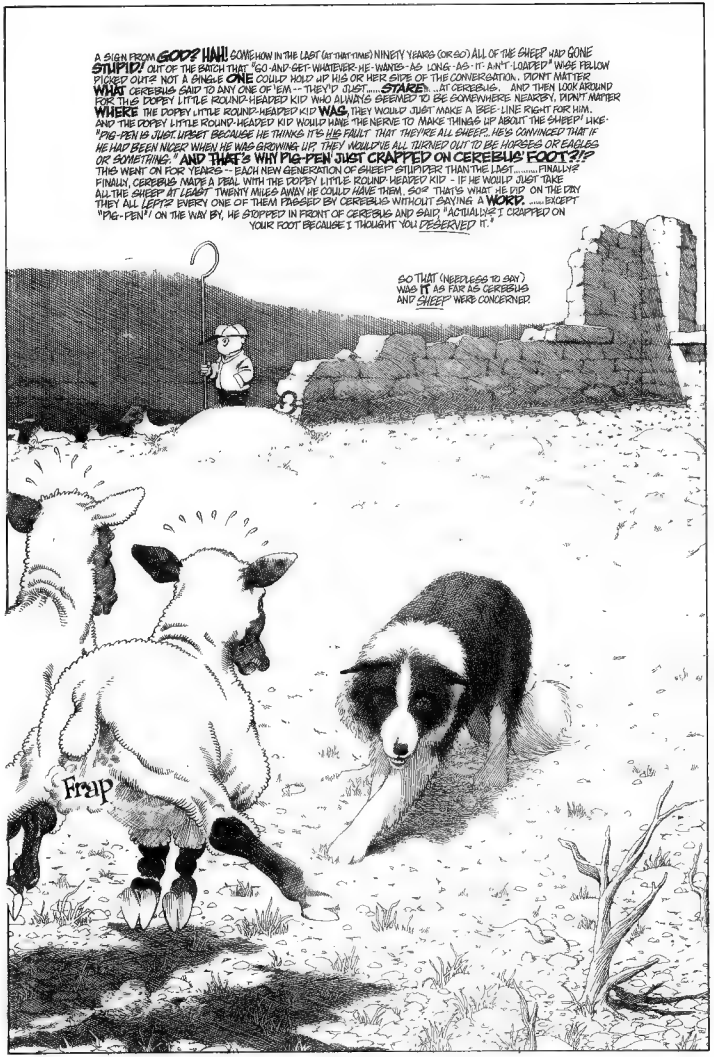
BUT RIGHT AFTER MOSHIE DIED? IT THREW CEREBUS INTO THIS **TERRIBLE FUNK!** **BLEAK & OY!** VERGING ON **MISHEGOSS** FOR A WHILE THERE

FINALLY? CEREBUS THOUGHT TO HIMSELF "HELP?" (HE THOUGHT) "THE *LAST* TIME CEREBUS WAS **TRULY HAPPY** WAS WHEN HE WAS **TENDING SHEEP.**" SO? CEREBUS SENT "GO-AND-GET-WHATEVER-HE-WANTS-AS-LONG-AS-IT-AIN'T-LOADED" WISE FELLOW TO PICK OUT A NICE ASSORTMENT OF RAMS AND EWES AND LAMBS AND GOT "UPON-THIS-ROCK-I-WILL-BUILD-WHATEVER-HE-WANTS" WISE FELLOW TO BUILD A NICE SHEEPFOLD (AT THAT POINT, THE AREA AROUND THE SANCTUARY WAS SPROUTING STUNTED LITTLE TUFTS OF GRASS IN THE MIDST OF THE DROUGHT-- PERFECT FOR SHEEP GRAZING!) (TO CEREBUS?) (A SIGN FROM **GOD!**)



A SIGN FROM **GOD?** **HAH!** SOMEHOW IN THE LAST (AT-THAT-TIME) NINETY YEARS (OR SO) ALL OF THE SHEEP HAD GONE **STUPID!** OUT OF THE BATCH THAT "GO-AND-GET-WHATEVER-HE-WANTS-AS-LONG-AS-IT-AIN'T-LOADED" WISE FELLOW PICKED OUT? NOT A SINGLE **ONE** COULD HOLD UP HIS OR HER SIDE OF THE CONVERSATION. DIDN'T MATTER **WHAT** CEREBUS SAID TO ANY ONE OF 'EM -- THEY'D JUST.... **STARE!** ...AT CEREBUS... AND THEN LOOK AROUND FOR THE DOPEY LITTLE ROUND-HEADED KID WHO ALWAYS SEEMED TO BE SOMEWHERE NEARBY, DIDN'T MATTER **WHERE** THE DOPEY LITTLE ROUND-HEADED KID **WAS**, THEY WOULD JUST MAKE A BEE-LINE RIGHT FOR HIM. AND THE DOPEY LITTLE ROUND-HEADED KID WOULD HAVE "THE NERVE TO MAKE THINGS UP ABOUT THE SHEEP" LIKE: "PIG-PEN IS JUST UPSET BECAUSE HE THINKS IT'S HIS FAULT THAT THEY'RE ALL SHEEP. HE'S CONVINCED THAT IF HE HAD BEEN NICER WHEN HE WAS GROWING UP, THEY WOULD'VE ALL TURNED OUT TO BE HORSES OR EAGLES OR SOMETHING." **AND THAT'S WHY PIG-PEN JUST CRAPPED ON CEREBUS' FOOT?!?** THIS WENT ON FOR YEARS -- EACH NEW GENERATION OF SHEEP STUPIDER THAN THE LAST..... FINALLY? FINALLY, CEREBUS MADE A DEAL WITH THE DOPEY LITTLE ROUND-HEADED KID - IF HE WOULD JUST TAKE ALL THE SHEEP AT LEAST TWENTY MILES AWAY HE COULD HAVE THEM. SO? THAT'S WHAT HE DID. ON THE DAY THEY ALL *LEFT?* EVERY ONE OF THEM PASSED BY CEREBUS WITHOUT SAYING A **WORD.** .....EXCEPT "PIG-PEN?" ON THE WAY BY, HE STOPPED IN FRONT OF CEREBUS AND SAID, "ACTUALLY? I CRAPPED ON YOUR FOOT BECAUSE I THOUGHT YOU *DESERVED* IT."

SO THAT (NEEDLESS TO SAY) WAS **IT** AS FAR AS CEREBUS AND *SHEEP* WERE CONCERNED.



SO? IT WAS "BACK TO RABBI." THIS TIME CEREBUS SET AN IMPOSSIBLE GOAL FOR HIMSELF: TO ACQUIRE A COPY OF EACH AND EVERY ONE OF THE ONE-HUNDRED-AND-FIFTY "ISSUES" OF RABBI!

(INCLUDING "ISSUES" SEVENTY AND ONE-OH-TWO - NEITHER OF WHICH CEREBUS HAD EVER EVEN SEEN - LET ALONE OWNED!)

AND TO LIMIT HIS COLLECTION TO ONLY COPIES THAT WERE IN "PERFECT" "MINK" CONDITION

(CEREBUS HAD NO IDEA WHETHER A "MINK" CONDITION SET OF RABBI EVEN EXISTED! -- BUT ONE THING CEREBUS DID KNOW ---- THERE WAS NO CORNER OF ESTARRION TOO REMOTE ... OR VIRTUALLY INACCESSIBLE ... OR EVEN FLAT-OUT DANGEROUS..

.. WHERE CEREBUS WAS UNWILLING TO SEND HIS LEGION OF SUBSTITUTE RABBI COLLECTORS IN SEARCH OF "MINK" CONDITION "ISSUES")

IN THE YEAR FIFTY-FIVE, COPIES OF "ISSUES" SIX, NINE AND TWO TURNED UP IN "MINK"...

..IN THE YEAR FIFTY-SIX, "ISSUES" ONE, THREE AND FOUR...

..IN THE YEAR FIFTY-SEVEN "ISSUES" FIVE, ELEVEN AND FOURTEEN...

..THEN, IN THE YEAR FIFTY-EIGHT, ONE OF THE LEGION OF SUBST-TUTE RABBI COLLECTORS (A FELLOW BY THE NAME OF CHUCK CHURCH) UNCOVERED THE LEGENDARY EDGAR ROZANSKI KILOMETRE-HIGH COLLECTION: EVERY "ISSUE" OF RABBI IN "PRETEEN MINK" CONDITION! (FULL COVER GLOSS, "BABY'S ASS" WHITE INTERIOR PAGES) IN THE ISOLATED LOST CITY OF THE SQUISHY VEGETARIANS HIGH UP (YOU-KNOW-THE-NAME) IN THE KOTA MOUNTAINS

(WHEN CEREBUS FIRST SAW THE EDGAR ROZANZKI KILOMETRE-HIGH COLLECTION, CEREBUS HAD A SPONTANEOUS "ISSUE" OF HIS OWN- WHICH ALMOST REDUCED "ISSUE" FORTY-ONE TO A LESSER GRADE OWING TO (ahem) (MOISTURE DAMAGE -- FORTUNATELY, CEREBUS UH MISSED.)

BUT THE THING WAS:

THERE WENT CEREBUS' HOBBY

"ISSUE" ONE-OH-TWO TURNED OUT TO BE THIS REALLY LAME STORY: "RABBI ON DRUGS" - AND "ISSUE" SEVENTY WAS, LIKE, THE WORST RABBI EVER: "VASS IST IN DA BIJSCHE?"

(CEREBUS HAD CONVINCED HIMSELF THAT ALL OF THE QUESTIONS HE HAD ABOUT RABBI WOULD BE ANSWERED IN THOSE TWO "ISSUES" BECAUSE THOSE WERE THE ONLY TWO CEREBUS HAD NEVER READ.

AND ALEPH-BAYZ NUMBER ONE - THAT GARTH INNOCENT HAD DONE WHEN HE WAS, UM, TWELVE. WAS NO HELP EITHER.)

SIGH

BY THE TIME CEREBUS HAD RE-READ "ISSUE" ONE-FORTY-NINE - THE LEGENDARY "DEATH OF RABBI." "ISSUE" (WHERE RABBI'S ARCH-FOE, KILGUARE ARCHART, CHOPS RABBI UP INTO TWELVE PIECES AND SCATTERS THE PIECES ALL AROUND RABBILAND) CEREBUS FOUND HIMSELF THINKING THE UNTHINKABLE

"THIS IS REALLY KIND OF ... STUPID."

OH, SURE - CEREBUS STILL CRIED WHEN HE RE-READ "ISSUE" ONE-FIFTY "THE FUNERAL OF RABBI" (WHERE RABBI'S YOUNGER BROTHER, BOBBY OLGEN, AND RABBI'S GIRL-FRIEND, LOIS BOUNCER, AND RABBI'S BOSS, PERRY MACNAMARA, EACH TAKE FOUR PIECES OF RABBI BACK TO HIS SHTETL OF SOLITUDE. CEREBUS ALWAYS CRIES AT THAT PART. ONLY THIS TIME CEREBUS JUST FELT KIND OF ... EMPTY... AFTER ... TURNING THERE SURROUNDED BY HIS "PRETEEN MINK" RABBI "ISSUES"

AND THEN! SUDDENLY! CEREBUS REALIZED! HEY! CEREBUS HAS NON-READ EVERY "ISSUE" OF RABBI! THAT MEANT CEREBUS WAS ESTARRION'S GREATEST-LIVING RABBI EXPERT!

AND, IMMEDIATELY! CEREBUS THREW HIMSELF INTO THE SINGLE GREATEST RESEARCH PROJECT OF ALL TIME!

"THE COMPLETE-NOT-ONLY-WITH-NO-JOT-MISSING-BUT-WITH-NO-TITTLE-SO-MUCH-AS-OUT-OF-PLACE-BUYER'S GUIDE-TO-THE-ONE-AND-ONLY RABBI!"

THE LEGION OF SUBSTITUTE RABBI COLLECTORS WHO HAD BEEN "UNDER-EMPLOYED" (TO PUT IT MILDLY) SINCE THE DISCOVERY OF THE EDGAR RIZZANSKI [illegible] AND NEW LIFE [illegible] AS THE **LEGION OF SUBSTITUTE RABBI**!

FIRST, CEREBUS HAD THEM GO THROUGH ALL ONE HUNDRED AND FIFTY SIGLIES AND WRITE DOWN **ALL** OF RABBI'S AMAZING POWERS. (SIX HUNDRED AND THIRTEEN, AS IT TURNS OUT.) THAT'S AN AVERAGE OF MORE THAN **FOUR** AMAZING POWERS PER SIGLIE) AND **THEN** CEREBUS HAD THEM GO THROUGH AND WRITE DOWN EVERY **APPEARANCE** OF EVERY ONE OF RABBI'S AMAZING POWERS, STARTING WITH THE **FIRST**... OR **ORIGIN**' APPEARANCE. SEE? HERE'S A SAMPLE ENTRY RIGHT HERE:

Power No.29 **Dextrorotatory Breath**
Origin Appearance **RABBI No.8**
"(Unleavened) Bread, (Bitter) Herbs,
(Bloody) Abattoir"]
First mentioned page 3 paragraph 2
First used page 3 paragraph 3
Description allows Rabbi to cause the
plane of polarization of light
to rotate to the right by blowing

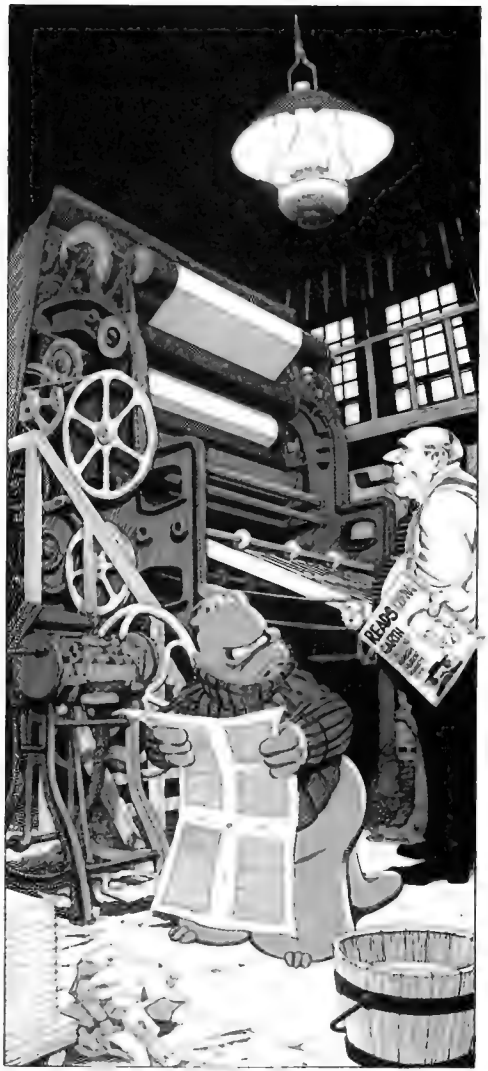
First used against The Muddy Mage
Becomes Levorotatory Breath in
RABBI No.42 (See " *Power No.166*
Levorotatory Breath " below)
Subsequent Appearances **RABBI No. 22**
(page 9 paragraph 4) **RABBI No.40**
(page 11 paragraph 2 page 13
paragraph 1)
References Only **RABBI No.42**
[illegible] *graph* [illegible] Stop!
[illegible] hanged direction!")
RABBI No. 56 *(page 8 paragraph 2*
Sickle This Levorotatory Breath
is even more effective than my
D.B ever was!")

BY THE TIME THEY WERE**FINISHED?** THE EDGAR RIZZANSKI KILOMETRE-HIGH COLLECTION WAS IN ABSOLUTE **SHREDS. BUT!** CEREBUS HAD REALIZED EARLY ON, THAT **THAT** WAS THE **SACRIFICE** CEREBUS WOULD HAVE TO MAKE IN ORDER TO GIVE UNTO THE WORLD **THE ONE DEFINITIVE GUIDE TO RABBI.**

THE DEFINITIVE GUIDE TO HIS **PARENTS** (TWO), THE DEFINITIVE GUIDE TO HIS **BROTHERS** (ONE) THE DEFINITIVE GUIDE TO HIS **GIRLFRIENDS** (ONE) THE DEFINITIVE GUIDE TO HIS **BOSSES** (ONE)
AND THE DEFINITIVE GUIDE TO **ALL** HIS ARCH-FOES **ALL** HIS ARCH-VILLAINS **ALL** HIS ARCH-RIVALS **ALL** HIS EVIL TWINS (MINIATURE), HIS EVIL TWINS (GIANT SIZE) HIS EVIL **TURTLE VERSIONS**
BTCBTBTKA BTCBTBTA, BTCBTBTKA (NINE HUNDRED AND SEVENTY-EIGHT)

BY THE MIDDLE OF **STEVE** IN THE YEAR SIXTY-SIX, CEREBUS' DREAM WAS BECOMING A REALITY. THE FIRST PAGE PROOFS OF THE FIRST VOLUME OF THE PROPOSED SIXTEEN VOLUME SERIES ROLLED OFF THE PRESSES... AT THE SAME TIME SOMEONE GAVE CEREBUS A **TWENTY-YEAR-OLD** COPY OF SOMETHING CALLED

READS JOURNAL



garth innisCent

Neil [McFarlane] told me that he had the same experience with *Morpheus* around that time. A sudden enormous interest from the Cirinists with much better accommodations, community centre, rather than tavern, signing tours. Along with a certain disproportionate interest in the stones themselves.

GROWTH: *And you believe that this was related to Cerebus starting to read your work*

INNISCENT: Well, that was Neil's theory, or at least an idea that he put forward one night when we were having dinner. The Cirinists, after all, had known where Cerebus was the whole time, everything about him. You know what he was reading and stuff like that. And, presumably they knew it was only a matter of time before all of the "Book of Rick" idiots found him as well. And they were hoping that we might prove to be..

GROWTH: *...a good influence?* [they both laugh]

INNISCENT: I know. Neil and me. Shows how desperate the Cirinists must've been at that time.

GROWTH: *Did this cause a problem for you creatively? The Cirinists pressuring you to..*

INNISCENT: No. Not really. As I say, I only created *Rabbi* in the first place because my son was getting to that age where boys get really fond of blood-soaked, grisly, gory entertainment. You remember.

GROWTH: *Mm. No..*

INNISCENT: The pulling-the-wings-off-flies age?

GROWTH: *Oh, well. (laughs) I still enjoy doing that. Let me switch gears, here for just a moment and ask you, don't you think that Jamie DeCarlo is unquestionably the most brilliant creator working in the field today?*

INNISCENT: Uhh...

GROWTH: *I realize when I ask that question that most people find it impossible to choose between Jamie, Gilbert, Jimmy Ware and Dan Zwigoff when it comes to deciding which one on any given day is possessed of the greater sheer mind-bogglingness, white-hot incandescent creative brilliance, relatively speaking.*

INNISCENT: Well. Uh ..

GROWTH: [laughs] *I see that you're no exception. I'll let you "off the hook" by getting back to our discussion of your own egregious cookie-cutter entertainment-product-food.*

INNISCENT: Shouldn't "food" be in quotation marks?

GROWTH: *Don't worry, our proofreaders will catch it. So, really, Rabbi was just a way for you to make a lot of money from creating sick, lurid entertainment for your own kid?*

INNISCENT: Well, no. For one thing there wasn't any money at that time.

GROWTH: *I see. So, publishing it yourself turned out to be not such a hot idea. You see now that you would have benefited from having a courageous, independent and heroic publisher as your champion and defender in the marketplace instead of choosing, as you did, to virtually starve to death for reasons of willful pig-headedness.*

INNISCENT: No. I mean, currency didn't exist. This was during the Cirinist years.

GROWTH: *I see. Right, right.*

INNISCENT: One of my other motivations was to ridicule organized religion, to ridicule the whole idea of belief in a Supreme Deity, or in deities of any kind.

GROWTH: *Which brings us back to your unreasonable opposition to publishers.*

INNISCENT: Not if I choose to ignore you, it doesn't. In one of those instances of creative serendipity, the same day that I got the idea for this project, I ran across a copy of a religious text called the Torah. Have you heard of it?

GROWTH: *Probably*

INNISCENT: How do you mean, "probably"?

GROWTH: *I'm a putative ... have an encyclopedic knowledge of esoterica*

INNISCENT: You mean, "esoterica".

GROWTH: *All of those things*

INNISCENT: I've never had to do one of these things single-handedly before. Why don't I just talk for a while and you can get your typesetter to insert a "**GROWTH:** *Right, right.*" every couple of paragraphs. You won't even have to be here. You can go and get a coffee or something.

GROWTH: *Right, right.*

INNISCENT: So, I ran across a copy of this book called the Torah, which was the primary religious text of a very obscure sect called the Jews. As happens with these sorts of situations, once I had chosen to go ahead with the project, the Jews and the Torah started turning up everywhere that I looked. A colleague would send me a letter and mention, just by-the-by, that he was reading something called the Books of Moshe, not to be confused with Mosher, the Wise Fellow.

GROWTH: *Right, right.*

INNISCENT: Later in the day, I would find out that "the Books of Moshe" was another term for the Torah, as is "the Pentateuch", "penta" meaning five: there are "Five Books of Moshe". Well, it was a dream come true for someone, like myself, who was actively trying to discredit religion and religious faith. In fact, most of the third and fourth books of the Torah are made up of these genuinely grisly mutilations and sacrificial burnings of helpless cattle. Sheep, goats, rams, lambs. I mean, *lambs!* What sort of a psychopathological nut-case would ask someone to dismember a *lamb*? I mean, you've seen a lamb, right?

GROWTH: *Right, right.*

INNISCENT: But, that's just what this Jewish "god" tells his people to do, according to the Torah. They "redeem" themselves by mutilating and burning *lambs*, heart-breakingly helpless, wooly, little snow white. .words fail me. My biggest concern, as I was pulling things out of the Torah and plunking them down on the page was (laughs) "Don't shoot the messenger". I used to carry my copy of the Torah around with me, I was so afraid that someone would steal it and I'd have nothing to show the Cirinists if they decided that I had gone insane. Like "Fist of Tabernacles", the fifteen issue, especially. That's actually based on a Jewish feast called "The Feast of Tabernacles". Where they decapitate *literally* seventy-one bullocks, fifteen rams, a hundred and five a *hundred and five* ..male lambs and spill virtual oceans of blood all over the floor of their religious sanctuary.

Well, *Rabbi* turned out to be a really successful experiment given what I set out to do. It gave my son exactly the complete immersion in blood and gore that he needed at that age *and* it turned him off of the idea of religion.. any religion ...for all time.

GROWTH: *Okay. I'm back. I wanted to follow up on something you said a little earlier in the interview.*

INNISCENT: What's that?

GROWTH: *When you said, "Uhh." I got the impression that you were picturing Jaime's earlier work like "Heartbreak Stew" and I was wondering if you consider yourself to be one of those Los Bros. DeCarlo fans who is mentally land-locked in the year Five or if you recognize that Jaime and Gilbert's best work is the work they're doing today. Or does that bring us again to comparing levels of incandescent bril-*

"...Jaime and Gilbert's best work is the work they're doing today..."

Facing page: A somewhat-less-egregious-than-usual illustration from *Rabbi* #47

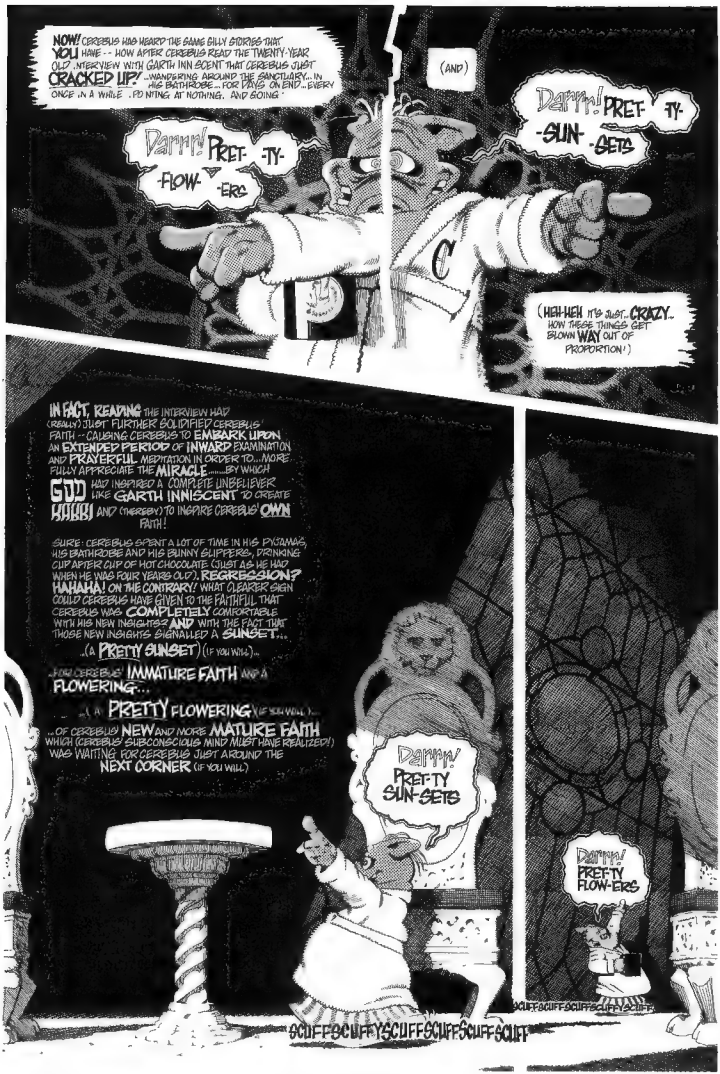
Right: Fat, balding and stupid Cerebus twenty years from now?

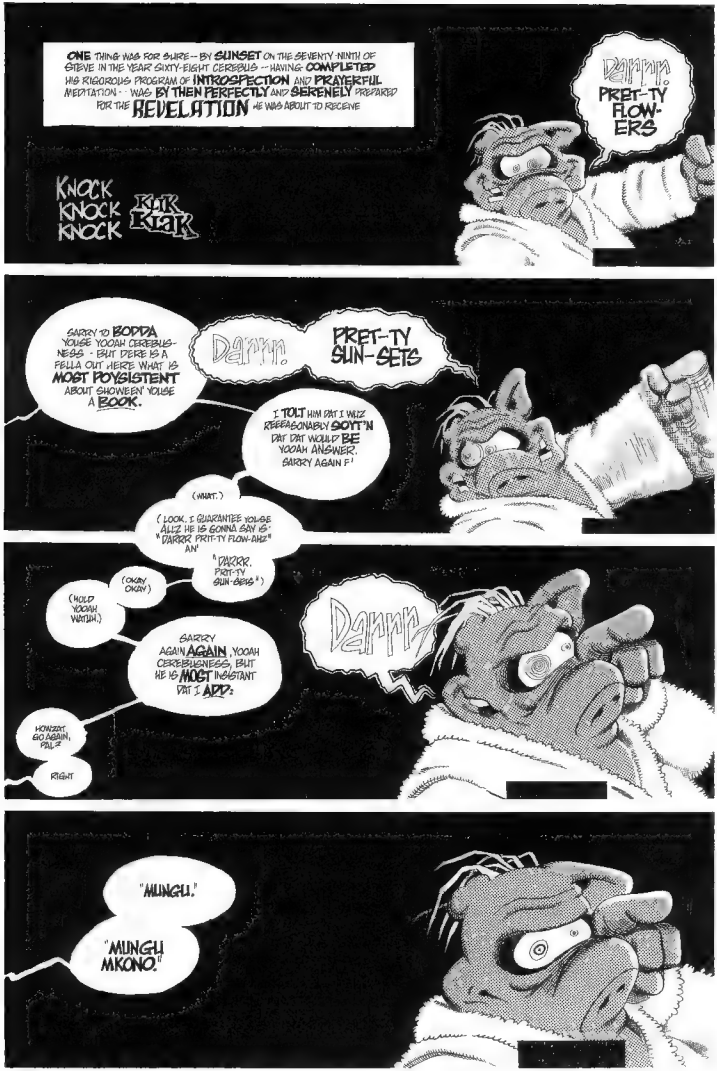
ROWTH: [laughs] *Our fearless leader.*
NNISCENT: [laughs] Yes, exactly. Our fearless leader So, I said to him, "You mean, it's the only thing he reads for *entertainment.*" And he shakes his head "No, *Rabbi* is the only thing he reads, *period*"
GROWTH: [loud, raucous laughter]
INNISCENT: [laughs] Careful, Gary [laughs] With this one, it is possible to start laughing, go completely "'round the bend" and not be able to stop even when they show up to haul you off to, you know, wherever I've seen it.
GROWTH: [laughing] *Oh, God. Oh, God* [After a few minutes they manage to compose themselves, the stenographer as well, who misses the first few sentences of the discussion as it resumes]
INNISCENT: . dwarfs the absolute authority of any Emperor or Pontiff, Western or Eastern, Lord Julius, Lord Julius' Council of Heirs before that was dissolved And the only thing he reads is a juvenile religious pulp fiction satire tailored to the sensibilities and tastes of a thirteen-year-old boy Actually, I think Kyle had *outgrown Rabbi* by the time he was thirteen [laughs] And that isn't the worst of it.
GROWTH: [laughs] *It* isn't?
INNISCENT: No, it isn't You know the thing I dreaded most of all? The one thought that haunted my every waking moment? [pauses] What if he wants to *meet* me?
[laughs]
GROWTH: [new gales of laughter] [again, the stenographer, as well, who misses the next couple of sentences]
INNISCENT: What if he wants to, you know, have dinner? And sends some goons over to get me?
GROWTH: [laughing] [high-pitched strangulated voice] *My ribs are starting to ache*
INNISCENT: [laughs] It gets worse. After a year or so, when he *hadn't* contacted me, I realized how *strange that* was He had been reading *Rabbi* for .oh, God what would it have been, at that point? Eight years? Ten

INNISCENT: Name a favourite author of yours...
GROWTH: *You mean, like Jaime De ...*
INNISCENT: No no Someone you *don't* publish yourself
GROWTH: *Oh, uh William S. Joyce, Fran Kafka*
INNISCENT: Joyce Joyce is a good one Let's say for some reason you've gone on an absolute William S. Joyce [laughs] *binge* That experience that we've all had You know, picking up something at random out of your library and re-reading a few pages and finding it just mesmerizing And suddenly you're re-reading everything Joyce ever wrote and appreciating it at a completely new level
GROWTH: *Actually, that just happened to me a while ago with F Stop Kennedy.*
INNISCENT: Kennedy Another good example Someone you appreciate at one level when you're twenty and a completely different level when you're forty So, you're in the midst of this binge and you have the level of power and absolute authority that Cerebus has What are you going to do?
GROWTH: [laughs] *Send some goons out to find F Stop Kennedy and drag him over to my place for dinner.*
INNISCENT: [laughs] Exactly! Now Let's leave aside the fact that people with political power are usually textbook cases of arrested emotional development insofar as what little need they have for emotional support they prefer to receive in the form of mass adoration from strangers In Freudian terms, a political leader is an infantile personality, driven purely by his core of ego that is virtually unchanged from when he was a baby A mentally unhealthy state of affairs that was, I saw, dramatically worse in Cerebus My fear, that he would take a sudden increase in my fear of the pathological levels of displacement he was exhibiting Do you know Freud, at all?
GROWTH: *Probably.*
INNISCENT: [laughs] Oh, I forgot! You're a publisher Well, for the sake of your readers who *aren't* publishers let me oversimplify by saying that displacement is the transfer of a subject's emotional attachment from the original object of whatever has caused his serious mental problems to another object in a way unrecognized by the subject in order to avoid addressing the primary conflict As distinct from transference, whereby the subject's emotional attachment is transferred, usually to the therapist, but in a way recognized by the subject which is non-evasive of reality ... ing again, the latter resembles imprinting
GROWTH: [laughs] *You mean, Cerebus thought you were his mother?*
INNISCENT: [laughs] No, that was certainly what I was *afraid* of. The whole anachitic symbiosis which would be the inevitable result of the displacement Cerebus was enacting, that is, the neurotic reduction into narrower and narrower parameters of those elements of reality he was willing to accept. But, the whole point was that *I* didn't enter into it in any way. In fact, Garth Innuscent was just another reality he had turned his back on in his gradual descent into psychosis The anachitic symbiosis was there, but it wasn't directed at *me*, it was directed at *Rabbi*.
GROWTH: [laughs] *You mean, Cerebus thought the one hundred and fifty issues of Rabbi were his mother?*
INNISCENT: [laughs] No, as I told you it's worse than that Cerebus thought that Rabbi, the fictional character, was his mother [They both laugh uproariously, the stenographer as well, causing another gap in the transcription]
... mother, father, primary narcissistic event, sole object of his ego libido, narcissistic libido and his object libido That's why I kept giving Rabbi more and more and more powers On the one hand, all indications were that Cerebus' entire psychic apparatus was breaking down, his schizophrenia was acute or soon would be reinforcing his infantile wish tendencies, I really thought that if anyone could get rid of the Cirinists, he could
GROWTH: *And he did* Which left me with only one problem I could get Cerebus to get rid of *Cerebus* when the time came?
GROWTH: *And?*
INNISCENT: I decided to do this interview and leave strict instructions that a copy of it is to be given to him after my death
GROWTH: *You think it will work?*
INNISCENT: I'm sure it will The moment he reads all this, every one of the myriad interrelated complexes I've implanted within him will spontaneously implode and leave him drooling human vegetable

Left: A drooling human vegetable But why not now when we can all enjoy it?

ROWTH: *Wow*
NNISCENT: [laughs] I knew that the sheer soulless sadism of it would appeal to you
GROWTH: *I'll say! But why after you're dead? Why not now when we could all enjoy it?*
INNISCENT: No, there's apt be a neurasthenic abreaction during the latency period when he would want to hunt me dow and kill me in a horrible fashion
GROWTH: *Spoilsport.*
INNISCENT: So. Can I get a discount c the copy of the *Reads Journal* I'm leaving
GROWTH: *No.* ⊔


NOW! CEREBUS HAD HEARD THE SAME SILLY SISTRESS THAT YOU HAVE -- HOW AFTER CEREBUS READ THE TWENTY-YEAR OLD "INTERVIEW WITH GARTH INN SCENT THAT CEREBUS JUST CRACKED UP!" ..WANDERING AROUND THE SANCTUARY.. IN HIS BATHROBE.. FOR DAYS ON END.. EVERY ONCE IN A WHILE .FD NITING AT NOTHING.. AND GOING '
Darrn! PRET- -TY -FLOW- -ERS
(AND)
Darrn! PRET- -TY- -SUN- -SETS
(HEH-HEH. IT'S JUST.. CRAZY.. HOW THESE THINGS GET BLOWN WAY OUT OF PROPORTION!)
IN FACT, READING THE INTERVIEW HAD (REALLY) JUST FURTHER SOLIDIFIED CEREBUS' FAITH -- CAUSING CEREBUS TO EMBARK UPON AN EXTENDED PERIOD OF INWARD EXAMINATION AND PRAYERFUL MEDITATION IN ORDER TO...MORE FULLY APPRECIATE THE MIRACLE..... BY WHICH GOD HAD INSPIRED A COMPLETE UNBELIEVER LIKE GARTH INNISCENT TO CREATE HIS/HER/ (MERGER) TO INSPIRE CEREBUS' OWN FAITH!
SURE: CEREBUS SPENT A LOT OF TIME IN HIS PYJAMAS, HIS BATHROBE AND HIS BUNNY SLIPPERS, DRINKING CUP AFTER CUP OF HOT CHOCOLATE (JUST AS HE HAD WHEN HE WAS FOUR YEARS OLD!). REGRESSION? HAHAHA! ON THE CONTRARY! WHAT CLEARER SIGN COULD CEREBUS HAVE GIVEN TO THE FAITHFUL THAT CEREBUS WAS COMPLETELY COMFORTABLE WITH HIS NEW INSIGHTS AND WITH THE FACT THAT THOSE NEW INSIGHTS SIGNALLED A SUNSET!...
..(A PRETTY SUNSET) (IF YOU WILL)...
..HOW CEREBUS' IMMATURE FAITH HAD A FLOWERING...
...(A PRETTY FLOWERING (IF SO WILL)...
...OF CEREBUS' NEW AND MORE MATURE FAITH WHICH CEREBUS' SUBCONSCIOUS MIND MUST HAVE REALIZED!) WAS WAITING FOR CEREBUS JUST AROUND THE NEXT CORNER (IF YOU WILL)
Darrn! PRET-TY SUN-SETS
Darrn! PRET-TY FLOW-ERS
SCUFF SCUFF SCUFF SCUFF SCUFF SCUFF SCUFF SCUFF SCUFF SCUFF SCUFF SCUFF


ONE THING WAS FOR SURE -- BY SUNSET ON THE SEVENTY-NINTH OF SIEVE IN THE YEAR SIXTY-EIGHT CEREBUS -- HAVING COMPLETED HIS RIGOROUS PROGRAM OF INTROSPECTION AND PRAYERFUL MEDITATION - - WAS BY THEN PERFECTLY AND SERENELY PREPARED FOR THE REVELATION HE WAS ABOUT TO RECEIVE
KNOCK KNOCK KNOCK
KOK KNAK
Darrn. PRET-TY FLOW-ERS
SARRY 'D BODDA YOUSE YOOAH CEREBUS-NESS - BUT D'ERE IS A FELLA OUT HERE WHAT IS MOST POYSISTENT ABOUT SHOWIN' YOUSE A BOOK.
Darrn. PRET-TY SUN-SETS
I TOLT HIM DAT I WUZ REEEASONABLY SOYT'N DAT DAT WOULD BE YOOAH ANSWER. SARRY AGAIN F'
(WHAT.)
(LOOK, I GUARANTEE YOUSE ALLIZ HE IS GONNA SAY IS "DARRR PRET-TY FLOW-ERS" AN'
"DARRR. PRET-TY SUN-SETS")
(OKAY, OKAY.)
(HOLD YOOAH WATSH.)
Darrn
SARRY AGAIN AGAIN, YOOAH CEREBULLNESS, BUT HE IS MOST INSISTANT DAT I ADD:
WONDAT, GO AGAIN, PAL?
RIGHT
"MUNGU."
"MUNGU MKONO."

essay

Islam, My Islam

Should God punish men for their perverse doings, He would not leave on earth a moving thing! But, to an appointed term doth he respite them; and when their term is come, they shall not delay or advance it an hour.
Sura "The Bee" 16:63

Upon the Prophet's return to Medina, word spread quickly of his conquest of Mecca and of the Koreish's capitulation and conversion to Islam. With this capitulation and this conversion, 628-29 became known as the Year of Deputations. The whole of Arabia—knowing that there was no group large enough to stand against the Prophet and his followers—sent delegations from their leadership to Medina to pledge their loyalty to the Prophet's cause.

Muhammad sat daily in the courtyard of the mosque in Medina receiving petitioners, giving commands and ruling over the people of the desert. Islam was now a theocratic socialist state in which all of the followers were equal, were taxed equally and fulfilled the same duties (Jews and Christians, the People of the Book, as mentioned in the last instalment, were taxed more heavily than Muslims but were not required to fight in the army of the faithful). Everywhere in Arabia, idols and statues were destroyed. Taxes paid to tax collectors were often—in Robin Hood fashion—distributed to the poor on the spot. Fights, thefts, personal injury disputes and the like were dealt with by family elders under civil law, *adat*, the ancient Arab tribal customs, while religious police enforced the *shariat* or religious laws, ensuring that no pork was sold in the markets, that adulterers were stoned to death, drunkards were whipped publicly and so on. The biographies of the Prophet reflect the schismatic seeds which were planted by the dichotomous realities now under his dominion: the ancient traditions of civil law versus the religious law; the original *ansar* and *mohajirun* versus the late converts to the faith, the veterans of Ohod and Badr versus the civilians.

He used none of the wealth which now poured into his treasury for himself. On the other hand, he ordered that the members of the tribes of the Hashim and the Abdelmottalibs, who has stood by him in parlous times, were to have free access to the State treasury—that is, to the treasury of the messenger of God. He was also accustomed to give lavish gifts to his other friends, and the ansar *and* mohajirun *received country places, money and cattle. Begging from the Prophet had become a constant habit on the part of most of the participants in the battles of Badr and Ohod.*

It is true that all the Muslims were equal. But the ansar *and* mohajirun, *who were now assembled in Medina, made up the recognized aristocracy of the new State. Their hearts and brains were full of the words and deeds of the Prophet. They knew his every foot-step, repeated all his sayings, and were adept in exchanging their excellent memories for coin of the realm. They were the parasites in the State of God and after the Prophet's death they made up a closed, pious caste the members of which lived in true sense of the word by their memories, and they protected their well-earned material zealously. The treasury of the caliphs often suffered under their pious demands. As a result, most of these parasites left large fortunes behind them.*

It was the irrefutable pre-eminence of the Prophet which allowed these dichotomies to exist—and to move forward in tandem—within the Muslim state: both the Meccan-centred, Kaaba-centred tribal worship of the *hajj*, alongside the monotheism represented by the One God, by the Koran and by the universal acceptance in the Arabian Lands of Muhammad as God's Last Messenger. Bloodthirsty Arabs and genuine Muslims—after the conquest of Mecca and the destruction of the three hundred and sixty idols—were united in belief in Muhammad: the latter out of sincere religious conviction and the inspiration of faith and the former out of the irrefutable evidence of Muhammad's temporal power, his efficacy as a

military and political ruler to whom all neighbouring military and political powers came to pay homage, acknowledging their subservience to him. This on-going duality of practical, worldly considerations wedded to subtler and more esoteric concerns of the spirit within Islam were amply demonstrated when the Pentagon released the videotape of Osama Bin Laden in mid-December of 2001 wherein he declaims, "When people see a strong horse and a weak horse, by nature they will like the strong horse." To say the least, this is an alien viewpoint to the Judeo-Christian mind and spirit whose own experiences (including their experiences with Islam itself) have inculcated a profound suspicion of the "strong horse" whether that "horse" was the Babylonians, Persians, the Egyptians, the Greeks, the Romans, the various Caesars, Herod, Pontius Pilate or the legions under their command. Only in Islam is faith and temporal power unashamedly united as two sides of the same coin. To the Christian, temporal power is reserved for Christ alone upon his promised return. Which is not far from the Judaic viewpoint, differing only insofar as the Orthodox Christian view holds that the Messiah will *return* and Judaism's conviction that *Meshiach hasn't come yet*. But, I'm getting ahead of myself.

In the year 630, Muhammad—having heard rumours that the Christian Byzantine Emperor was contemplating a military campaign to wipe out Islam and annex the Arabian lands—mounted his own expedition of thirty thousand warriors. Upon reaching Thabouk, on the borderland of the Byzantine Empire, Muhammad declared, "There lies the land of Cham, Syria. Here is the boundary of Arabia. Here we will await the enemy." Twenty days later, no enemy had shown itself and, after conquering and looting a few border towns, the Muslims returned to Medina.

I think it worth noting that, at the time of this expedition, Byzantium was—in one sense—a world power which had emerged victorious from ten years of bloody conflict with Persia and extended across much of Africa, Europe and Asia. In another sense, it was just the latest fractious and fragmented example of *caesaropapism*—Christianity's own version of temporal power wedded to spirituality, a church under the direct control of an Emperor—philosophically and endlessly at war with and within itself over the relentless and circuitous debate regarding the divine-versus-human nature of the Christ. The *schism du jour* of the seventh century was primarily between the Orthodox Catholic view and that of the Monophysites (which held that Christ was entirely divine even though he had taken on human form). At the time that Muhammad was patiently awaiting the arrival of some military force from the Byzantine Emperor, the Patriarch Sergius of Constantinople was attempting to convert that same Emperor (Heraclius) to the idea that the Christ and the Son worked divine and human deeds by one divine-human operation (*energeia*). This united the Orthodox and the Monophysites in Egypt, but also drew attack. As a fall-back position, Sergius attempted to bypass the whole question of whether or not there was one or more *energeia* at work within Christ and to achieve unanimity on the question that in Christ there was only one *thelema* (will). Six years after the death of Muhammad, the Emperor Heraclius issued an edict containing Sergius' views, forbidding the discussion of whether there were one or two energies at work within Christ and declaring that Christ had one will. Clearly, as the Christian world fragmented along the lines of these hair-splitting sophistries, the Arab world and the Muslim world were uniting into a single monolithic force.

Less than two years after the expedition to the boundaries of the Byzantine Empire, Muhammad contracted the illness which would prove fatal. This is my favourite telling of his last days, from a 1964 translation of Ibn Ishaq's biography, edited by Michael Edwardes for the Folio Society of London:

> *The malady began thus. He had given orders for an expedition to set out to the borders of Syria; that night, his manumitted slave recorded, "The Apostle of God awoke me in the middle of the night and said, 'I am commanded to implore pardon for the dead in the cemetery!' So I went there with him, and when he stood among the dead, he exclaimed, 'Peace be upon you, tenants of these graves! May the state you are in be better than that which lies in store for mankind! Rebellions are setting in like waves of darkness. They will follow each other, and the last will be worse than the first.' Then he turned to me and said, 'I have been offered a choice between the treasures of this world and everlasting life, or paradise and the meeting with my Lord. I have chosen the second.' I replied, 'Thou art my father and my mother; take the treasures of this world now and paradise afterwards.' But he continued, 'No. I have chosen to meet my Lord.' After that, the malady of the Apostle began, and God took him away."*

According to Aisha, "The Apostle of God returned from the cemetery to me. I had a headache and complained 'My head! My head!' And he replied, 'No, Aisha. My head!' Then he said, 'Wouldst thou be distressed to die before me, that I might stand over thee and enshroud thee, and pray for thee, and bury thee?' But I exclaimed, 'If that were to happen, I can see thee no sooner bury me than return to my house, to celebrate thy wedding with some other woman!' The Apostle smiled, and, though the malady began to develop, he continued to make the round of his wives until, in the house of Maymuna, it overcame him. Then he called his wives to ask their permission to spend in my house such time as he was ill, and permission was granted to him."

Part IV

I'm going to interrupt the telling of the last days of the Prophet to address the matter of his thirteen wives (fourteen, if you include Khadija, who died before his mission had been fully undertaken). Polygamy—and particularly polygamy on such a *scale*—is certain to raise the hackles of feminists everywhere, which is one of the reasons that I've chosen this late point in the recounting of the early history of Islam to address the issue. On the one hand, the Prophet's wives, particularly Aisha, play a role of great significance in Islam. On the other hand, their role is a minor one when compared to that of, say, God or of the archangel Gabriel, or the Koran and the secular-humanist-feminist sensibility which so widely infects our present society can be catered to (in my view) only so far before proportion and perspective become so skewed as to obliterate what I see as the Genuine Meaning of God's Revelation through his Last Messenger and Seal of Prophets. I wanted the important masculine qualities of that revelation to be fully addressed before giving the minor feminine chords their due: in complete violation of our degraded western feminist approach to any subject—which is to always trumpet and magnify whatever meagre feminine accomplishment can be attached to any story and only then to address its central, masculine considerations. First, an overview of the Prophet's marital situation—to which Aisha referred (to Muhammad's rare amusement) in the excerpt above:

At the eastern entrance to the mosque in Medina there were nine lowly clay huts arranged in a semi-circle. The doors of the huts consisted of dark curtains. Some of the huts were enclosed with small verandahs. The curtains protected the life and activities in the huts from the gaze of the curious.

It was in these huts that the "mothers of the faithful," the numerous wives of the Prophet, lived. Muhammad had more wives than were allowed by the laws of Islam, for only four wives were permitted to each of the faithful. The Prophet, whose life was filled with work and prayer, was allowed to have as many wives as his strength permitted inasmuch as he was a favorite of God. Other Prophets like Solomon, David and Abraham, had enjoyed a similar privilege. Solomon had a hundred wives. God allowed him to have them, for superhuman virility is the sign of the Prophet. Muhammad was the seal of the prophecy. His strength was incommensurable. But Muhammad was an ascetic and although his strength was greater than that of Solomon, he only had fourteen wives.

Muhammad was married to fourteen wives. Fourteen women had the title, "mother of the faithful." But countless were the number of women who came to Muhammad and asked for his love. To all of them Muhammad gave his love, for his heart was filled with sympathy and great was is inclination for the weakness of women.

One desire burned in Muhammad's heart, and drove him from one woman to another, from one slave to the next. Muhammad wished for a son who would be worthy of his father's inheritance. A son who could take over God's state and complete Muhammad's work. But his wish was never fulfilled and until he was an old man Muhammad wandered through the flower garden of his harem, sought out beautiful slaves, embraced countless women and prayed to God, the Creator of man. But no son was given to him. The last of the Prophets was not to have any heirs.

If Aisha was the favourite wife of the Prophet, then Sanda was certainly the least beloved. She was a widow of Mecca and Muhammad had married her two months after Khadija's death mere-

ly because an Arab cannot remain unmarried without damaging his reputation. He never loved Sanda and it is possible that he would have divorced her had it not been for the fact that she was very intelligent. One night a week was spent by Muhammad in Sanda's hut. He did not enjoy it and merely did so because he thought it was his duty. When Sanda learned of Muhammad's love for Aisha, she did an amazing thing and probably something which had never occurred before. She officially gave over her night to Aisha. She gained a good deal through this. She remained in her hut until the end of her life, regularly received presents from the Prophet and was looked upon as a "mother of the faithful." Muhammad knew how to be grateful. "Even on the day of the resurrection she will be my wife," Muhammad said of Sanda.

Khasar bint Omar, the daughter of Omar, was also not among the favourite wives of Muhammad. She had been married to a Muslim warrior. After the death of her husband, Omar was on the lookout for a suitable marriage for his daughter. Despite his great power, he could not force anyone to marry his daughter for she was both old and ugly. Omar felt humiliated and did not know what to do. When Muhammad heard of this, he had pity on his friend and did what but few men would have done, he married the daughter because of his friendship to her father. He was also a good husband to her, visited her regularly, gave her presents and did not neglect the nights which were allotted to her.

On the other hand, his love for Zainab was both gentle and genuine. She had had a very romantic past. Zainab had been the wife of Zaid, the former slave and adopted son of Muhammad. Muhammad had seen her and was pleased by her appearance, her seriousness and her piety. He visited her a number of times and talked with her. One day Zaid came to Muhammad and said, "O Prophet, I am but a simple Muslim but you are the messenger of God. Your deeds are greater than mine and your wish is stronger than mine. Take my wife for you need her more than I do." And the slave Zaid divorced his wife and gave her to the Prophet. Zainab was pious and very beautiful. She loved the Prophet because he was a Prophet, and did not wish to accept any money or presents from him. Before she had married Zaid, she had been a shoemaker and had sold her wares in the bazaars. Even as "mother of the faithful" she did not stop her work. The money she made was divided among the poor of the city. After Muhammad's death, when all the wives of the Prophet were presented with gold by the caliphs, she alone remained poor and without demands. The Caliph Omar gave her a huge fortune which she distributed among the poor. Each of the wives of the Prophet were entitled to choose something from the treasury of Islam, but Zainab took nothing but a lovely dress in which she wished to be buried. When she died she was carried on Muhammad's bier to her grave, for next to Aisha, she was Muhammad's favourite wife.

Muhammad's wives were numerous and he loved them all ardently. He devoted much of his time to his harem and there are many provisions in the Koran concerning the wives of the Prophet. For example, they had to hide their faces modestly behind veils in the presence of strange men. At first this fashion was copied by the upper classes and then came into general usage. This was the origin of the Muslim practice of wearing veils. The wives of the Prophet were also forbidden to remarry after his death.

The harem was made up of the nine huts around the mosque. Muhammad himself did not possess a hut. Even in the days of his grandeur, when he ruled over all Arabia, he did not have a house of his own. His nights were regularly and systematically planned. Each wife knew which night the Prophet would spend with her. Only a new wife had the right to receive Muhammad three nights in succession.

Whenever he brought a present to one of his wives, a similar gift was given to all the members of the harem. On the other hand, he did not spoil his wives and it was considered a great event when, returning from a successful battle, he gave each of them eighty measures of figs, corn, and wheat. He did not permit gossip or jealousy among his wives and they were forbidden by means of severe punishments.

Aisha was not exempt from these punitive measures, for Muhammad was just to both his subjects and his wives. He was also quick to defend and protect any woman who had been dealt with unjustly.

On one occasion Muhammad set out against a rebellious Jewish tribe. He destroyed the tribe

and brought back with him a pretty Jewish maiden. The girl, whose name was Safiya, became his eleventh wife. The harem was annoyed upon the arrival of each of Muhammad's new wives and Aisha, the most temperamental of them all, did not cease insulting the Jewess Safiya because of her faith. One day Muhammad heard them quarrel and said to Safiya: "Safiya, say to this woman, my father's name was Aaron, my uncle was Moses, and who were your fathers? Heathen!" Thereupon he banished Aisha for two months.

An Oriental conqueror battles the world with his sword, but he assures his possession of it by means of the tender ties of marriage. If an eastern people is to obey its ruler then it wishes to be related to him. Even in our day the harem of an Oriental ruler contains women from all the provinces of his country. The people feel themselves related by blood with the children of the ruler, and this assures unity within the country. A similar fate was not spared Muhammad. The noblest families and tribes sent their prettiest women to him so that he might marry them.

Once Muhammad received the news that the head of the royal tribe Kindit wished to send him his daughter for a wife. The nobler an Arab is the longer his name. One can have some idea of the nobility if this particular bride from her father's name which was: Noman ibn Abî Djadu Aswad ben Kharits ben Djadu ben Akul el Merar. The daughter of this famous man was considered one of the most beautiful of all the Arab women. Asma was brought to Medina with much pomp. The marriage was celebrated with all due ceremony and Asma moved into one of the nine huts. Although Asma was very beautiful she was stupid and the inhabitants of the harem, who were jealous of each new competitor, knew how to benefit by it. Shortly before the bridal night, one of Muhammad's wives came to Asma, admired her beauty and, being very friendly, gave her some advice. Among other things she said: "If you wish to find approval in the eyes of the messenger of God, go say to him when he enters your hut: 'God protect me from you.' Only in this manner can you be sure of his love." We have said that Asma was as stupid as she was beautiful. She followed the advice given her and when Muhammad entered her hut she said: "God protect me from you." She then lifted her veil and looked at the Prophet. "May God protect me from you as well," replied the Prophet and, leaving the hut, he sent her a letter of divorcement. In spite of her fashionable parents, he remained steadfast and refused to forgive Asma. It has been said that Muhammad often sent back his brides on their bridal night because of similar tricks perpetrated by his wives.

At the height of his power, when he ruled over all Arabia, Muhammad was subjected to a veritable assault of women. His last marriage was celebrated two months before his death. If a general conquered a distant province, or if some ruler wished to show Muhammad his respect, he would send him a number of beautiful slaves in addition to other treasures. Muhammad would either present them to his friends or keep them for himself. In the year 7 of the Hegira, when the Christian governor of Egypt had heard of the Prophet, because he was afraid and also as a precautionary measure, he sent him a thousand bars of gold, twenty pieces of Egyptian linen, a white donkey, some honey, a eunuch with whom the Prophet could do nothing, and two beautiful Egyptian slaves who were immediately converted to Islam.

The Prophet took one of them but did not marry her. She was a light skinned, curly-haired Copt, Maria. Muhammad loved her passionately, she became his favourite concubine and he visited her frequently despite the objections of his wives. Maria was the only one among all the women who fulfilled his dearest wish, she bore him a son—Ibrahim, the heir of his empire. But his happiness was short-lived for the boy died when he was one year old.

Years passed by. The youthful prowess of the Prophet began to wane. When he was sixty the Prophet found it difficult to maintain the schedule of visits to his wives. Muhammad was a wise man and he had pity upon his wives. He knew that women ranging from seventeen to twenty years of age could not love a sixty-year-old man wholeheartedly, even if he was a Prophet. In his wisdom and mildness, he decided to extend freedom to his wives. He assembled them about him and revealed the words of God in the 28th and 29th verses of sura 33, "The Confederates":

O Prophet! Say to thy wives: If ye desire this present life and its braveries,
come then, I will provide for you, and dismiss you with an honourable dismissal. But

if ye desire God and His Apostle, and a home in the next life, then, truly, hath God prepared for those of you who are virtuous, a great reward.

"Reflect upon the words of God," said the Prophet, "and answer according to your conscience." All the women replied: "We love God, His messenger, and that which comes after death." Only one of the women, Fatima of the tribe of Kilab, preferred the joys of her youth. The Prophet gave her many presents and dismissed her. Later on she became so poor that she was forced to collect camel dung to be used for fuel. She died in dire poverty and was called Chkyka, the miserable one.

The "mothers of the faithful," the first wives of the Prophet, lived modestly and in retirement. Little provision was made for their person and nearly every comfort was lacking in their huts. There was not even a place where they could satisfy their needs, so that they were often forced to retire to the desert at night for this purpose. It was only during the last years of his life that the Prophet caused conveniences to be erected, for he suspected that their nocturnal excursions were for purposes other than those they claimed.

The Prophet's deeply-rooted suspicion of what might or might not transpire when a wife goes out into the desert to answer a call of nature had its origin in a particular episode, which we will see momentarily.

The wives of the Prophet owned nothing and they were overjoyed at the smallest gift. Their entire fortune consisted of twelve ounces of gold which the Prophet had paid for them.

Later, when the Prophet was dead and Islam has already encircled an entire world, the women were richly provided with gold. The treasuries of the caliphs were constantly at their disposal. The widow's pensions were small fortunes and more money was offered for the lowly huts than had ever been possessed by all Arabia. So, for example, the caliph Walid paid fifty thousand gold dirhems to the heirs of Zainab for her hut, a huge fortune in the eyes of the old world. The Jewess Safiya left a fortune of one hundred thousand gold dirhems.

All the treasures of the orient were now at the disposal of the Prophet's wives. Their relatives were given the highest positions in Islam. Selma, who at first did not wish to marry the Prophet because she had children for whom Muhammad would have had to provide, lived to see Ali appoint her sons as governors of entire provinces. For generations, the blood relatives of the wives of the Prophet together with his own relatives, made up the aristocracy of Islam. The wives themselves were given all honours up to the time of their death and not a single caliph dared deny them any wish.

In this fashion posterity honoured the women who had loved God and His messenger more than they did all the joys of existence, the women who lived in narrow huts in which the Prophet spent his nights, and who never had wheaten bread to eat for two successive days.

Moving now from an overview of the Prophet's marital situation, I anticipate the feminist ballistic level to escalate several notches in addressing the circumstances under which the marriage to his favourite wife, Aisha (who is always so-designated despite the fact that it is a centerpiece of polygamous marriage in Islam that each wife is to be treated equally and that no favouritism is to be shown) took place:

The nicest—that is to say, the least lowly of the huts—belonged to the favourite wife of the Prophet, the daughter of Abu Bakr, the friend and well-wisher of Muhammad, the beautiful Aisha. Aisha was six years old when Muhammad had first seen her in Mecca and he could not take his eyes off her. This was shortly after the death of Khadija who at that time was Muhammad's only wife. Abu Bakr, who had understood the enraptured look on the face of his friend, promised to give his daughter to him when she would be old enough for marriage and love. But Muhammad's rapture was so great that after three years, he married the nine-year-old Aisha in Medina. He himself was fifty years old at that time.

"I sat," recounted Aisha, "on a rocking chair and I was playing with other girls. My mother

called me. I went although I did not know why she had called me. My mother took me by the hand and led me to the door of the house. My heart began to beat but gradually I again became quiet. I washed my face and hair, and my mother dressed me up and led me into the house where there were many women. They received me with good wishes and they also decorated me. When they were finished, they gave me over to the Prophet."

Aisha was the favourite wife of the Prophet, and of the many who were his, she was the only one who had come to him as a virgin. Following the ancient Arabian custom, he had paid her father, Abu Bakr, twelve ounces of gold. Later on this was also the price Muhammad was willing to pay for a wife. He never paid more. During the first year of the great flight it was impossible for Muhammad to raise twelve ounces of gold. But since tradition had to be maintained, the father of the bride, Abu Bakr, lent the gold to his friend Muhammad who in turn solemnly offered it as the purchase price for Aisha. Memories of the first hard years in Medina were connected with Aisha in Muhammad's mind. In spite of his power, Muhammad had still been poor at that time and he had never even thought of amassing a fortune. For this reason his marriage was a poor one. The marriage feast consisted of milk, the marriage bed was a sheep's stall, and the nine-year-old bride's dowry, two shirts, two simple silver bracelets and a little silver money. For poverty was the virtue of the Prophet. "In the first years of our marriage," said Aisha, "it happened that for months we never lit a fire, for our food was water and dates. Now and again someone would send us some meat. Wheat bread was never seen two days in succession in the house of the Prophet."

When Aisha married she was still a child and she had brought her toys with her to the house of her husband. She played with dolls and amazed the faithful, for dolls are representations of human beings. They are strictly forbidden in Islam. But Aisha was permitted to do much which was forbidden to others of the faithful. She was very pretty, witty and playful, liked to wear gold rings and anointed her hair so much that the ointment oftentimes ran down her forehead.

The central episode in Ibn Ishaq's biography of Muhammad which concerns Aisha takes up a whole chapter, under the (somewhat) odd—but, to me, entirely suitable—title of "Aisha and the History of the World". It takes place when Aisha is a teenager—anywhere from twelve to sixteen years old, depending on whose math you're using:

According to Aisha, "When the Apostle of God was about to depart on a journey, he used to throw lots to decide which of his wives he would take with him. Before an expedition against the Banu Mustaliq, my lot came out; so the Apostle of God took me with him. In those days women used to eat only the necessities of life, and did not become strong and heavy on meat. When my camel was ready, I would seat myself in the howdah, which my attendants would then lift on to the back of the camel; then they would attach it to the beast and we could set off.

"During our return from the Mustaliq expedition we paused to rest for a night. Before the company set off again, I withdrew for a moment; but I was wearing a string of Yemeni beads and when I returned I found they had fallen from my neck. Although the people were about to start I went back to the place where I had been and searched until I found them. The attendants who were in the habit of saddling my camel had meanwhile done so and had taken up the howdah (thinking that I was in it as usual) and tied it upon the camel; then they had led the camel off. When I returned to the camp not a soul was there, so I wrapped myself in my cloak and laid myself down, for I knew that they would miss me and come to seek me.

"While I was thus reclining, Sufwan—who had fallen behind the company for some reason, and had not spent the night with them—passed by and observed me. He exclaimed, "To God we belong, and to Him we must return! This is the wife of the Apostle of God!" and he brought his camel near and said, "Mount!" He withdrew a little and I mounted, then he took hold of the camel's head and advanced rapidly, being anxious to overtake the company; but we neither overtook them, nor did they miss me, until they again encamped. When Sufwan arrived, leading me on his camel, slander was uttered against me although I knew nothing of it.

What is omitted (in my view, rather significantly) from this version of the story is that Muhammad

had taken another wife or a concubine from among the captives of the Mustaliq campaign, who occupied his attentions on the return journey as Aisha had done on the outbound part of the expedition…leaving Aisha, presumably, largely abandoned and to her own devices. It seems to me not altogether unlikely that the Prophet's teenaged wife had gotten up to some kind of mischief as a result. Adultery with Sufwan seems an extremely remote possibility, given that the punishment in Islam is death by stoning. At the same time, in the vast expanse of the desert, how *did* Sufwan happen upon little Aisha in the midst of an abandoned camp? What was *he* doing, lagging so far behind the others? Leaving that aside, I don't think it possible to underestimate the significance of Aisha's own words: "…for I knew that they would miss me and come to seek me," in searching out an ulterior motive on the part of a vain, teenaged wife who has been abandoned by her husband for the company of another.

"I became very ill when we arrived in Medina and so I still did not hear the slanders, but they were communicated to the Apostle as well as to my parents. They did not speak of it to me, but I observed the absence of that kindliness which the Apostle of God used always to show me when I was ill. This I thought strange on his part. However, I knew nothing of the matter until I had recovered from my illness, after more than twenty days.

"At that time we still lived like true Arabs and had no privies in our houses as the Persians did, because we despised and disliked such luxuries. Instead, we went out to an open plain in Medina, the women going at night. Thus I walked out one night, and the woman who walked with me stumbled over the hem of her skirt and cursed, saying 'Let Auf perish!' 'By God!' I exclaimed. 'That seems to me an evil wish, since it concerns a Believer who has fought at Badr.' The woman asked, 'Has not the news reached thee, o daughter of Abu Bakr?' and when I asked what news, she told me of the slanders. I could scarce believe it and fled to the house of my mother, weeping so that I thought my heart would break. I said to my mother, 'May God forgive thee; the people slander me and you have said nothing of it to me!' and she replied, 'Do not be unhappy. There are but few handsome women—who are loved by their husbands, and have rivals—who escape false imputations and slander.'

"Meanwhile, unknown to me, the Apostle of God addressed the people, glorified and praised God, and said, 'How do you dare to insult me by insulting my family, and by saying things about them which are not true? By God, I know nothing but good of them.' [The lies were spread by some of the Khazraj and the sister of another wife of the Apostle.] When the Apostle of God had finished, Usayd, one of the Aws, rose and said, 'If the slanders are spoken by the Aws, we shall silence them; and if they be spoken by our brothers, the Khazraj, say the word and we shall punish them!' Then one Sad b. Ubada, who had hitherto seemed a true Believer, said, 'You lie. By God, you have suggested this punishment only because you know the slanderers are of the Khazraj; had they been of your tribe you would not have suggested it.' Usayd retorted, 'You lie, by God! You are a Hypocrite and give your support to the Hypocrites!' Then the people assailed each other, and it would have taken little for evil to come to pass between the two tribes.

"The Apostle of God now consulted Ali and Usama, and Usama spoke only what was good, saying, 'O Apostle of God. We know only good of Aisha, and thou knowest only good of her, and these are merely false and idle rumours!' But Ali said, 'There are many women! Thou canst take another! Ask her slave and she will tell thee the truth.' So the Apostle of God summoned my slave to examine her. Ali rose and struck the woman a violent blow, and said, 'Tell the truth to the Apostle of God', and she replied, 'I know only what is good; and I cannot say ill of Aisha, save that one day I was kneading my dough and asked her to watch it, but she fell asleep and a sheep came and ate it up.' "

Considering that this version of events was, presumably, being related by Aisha to Ibn Ishaq or one of his predecessors decades after the fact (Aisha outlived the Prophet by almost fifty years), you have to admire the scrupulous bits of detail like the sheep eating her slave's dough. Although it would take many years for the full impact of Ali's lack of faith in Aisha's virtue to be felt in Islam, the fact that he didn't support her version of events effectively doomed his chances at being Muhammad's successor, despite the fact that Muhammad himself had declared him to be "my satrap, my vizier" when Ali was only ten.

Here the seeds were planted for the schism between Shiite Muslims (who believed—and *still* believe to this day—in the intended succession through Ali and his sons) and Sunni Muslims (who believe in the succession through the Caliphs, beginning with Abu Bakr, coincidentally—or not-so-coincidentally, depending on your viewpoint—Aisha's father).

Meanwhile, back at the Muslim version of *As The World Turns:*

"After this, the Apostle came to me, while both my parents were with me; and I wept. He sat down, glorified and praised God, and then said, 'Thou must have heard what the people are saying. Fear God! If thou hast done wrong, then repent, for God accepts the repentance of his servants.' While he spoke thus, my tears ceased to flow. I waited for my parents to reply to the Apostle, but neither of them spoke; and I entertained too low an opinion of myself to hope that God would reveal verses of the Koran about me. But I hoped the Apostle might have a vision in his sleep, in which God would expose the liars, or justify me, or tell the Apostle the truth. When I saw that my parents did not speak, I asked, 'Will you not reply to the Apostle of God?' They said, 'We know not what to say to him!'

"When I saw my parents thus estranged from me my tears flowed once more, and I cried, 'I shall never repent to God for what I am accused of, because God knoweth I should be repenting something which did not occur, and thus I should speak untruth. But if I deny the charges, you will not believe me.'

"And the Apostle of God had not yet left us when he lost consciousness, as always happened before a revelation; then I neither feared nor cared, for I knew that I was innocent, and that God would do no injustice to me. But my parents seemed about to die for fear, lest God might send a revelation confirming the words of the slanderers.

"The Apostle of God came back to consciousness and sat up, and the perspiration trickled like pearls from his forehead, although it was a winter day. Then he wiped it away, and said, 'Allah has revealed thy innocence,' and I replied, 'God be praised!' After that, he went out to the people and recited to them verses of the Koran revealed to him by God, and he ordered the slanderers to be scourged."

Sufwan, who had been slandered with Aisha, met one of the worst slanderers, the poet Hassan, and struck him with his sword. Another man, Thabit, hastened to assist Hassan, grasping Sufwan, and tying his hands to his neck with a rope; he then took him to the dwelling of one of the Khazraj, where Abdullah b. Rawaha met them. He asked, "What is this?" and Thabit replied, "Are you displeased? He struck Hassan with a sword and, by God, he might have killed him." Abdullah asked, "Does the Apostle of God know of this?" and when Thabit said he did not, Abdullah told him, "You have been presumptuous! Let the man go."

When the Apostle heard of this, he had Sufwan and Hassan brought before him, and Sufwan explained, "He offended and mocked me; anger overcame me, and I struck him." Then the Apostle said to Hassan, "Why do you malign my people when God has given them enlightenment? I think you deserved the blow." However, the Apostle soothed the poet by presenting him with a fortress in Medina, and a Coptic slave girl. Then Hassan composed verses complimentary to the chastity and beauty of Aisha.

Quite a roller-coaster ride for all concerned. I consider myself a pretty dispassionate individual, but you can't help but have great empathy for this weepy-eyed teenager whose parents are, if not "hanging her out to dry" at least not exactly putting their necks on the line on her behalf. It does seem significant to me that Muhammad—who made no secret of his complete antipathy for poets of all kinds, and particularly for those who offend and mock others with their verses—effectively rewarded Hassan with a fortress and a Coptic slave girl for casting aspersions on Aisha's virtue. Or, perhaps more accurately, who *bribed* the poet with these materialisms to change his tune on the same subject. In both instances, describing either possibility as "significant" dramatically understates the case, in my view.

[Parenthetically, on a subject related only tangentially to the above, I think it also worth noting that Islamic tradition holds that it was Aisha who introduced the idea of Muslim women "taking the veil" and by the same tradition that it was at her instigation that all of the Prophet's wives began to do so, cover-

ing themselves from head-to-toe in public so as to prevent any eyes but those of the Prophet from beholding their unadorned beauty. Given Aisha's own well-documented adolescent vanity, it would not surprise me to find that she did so specifically to try and win back Muhammad's favour and to assist in the restoration of his faith in her wifely honour and virtue. Whether her purpose was accomplished or not, it is irrefutable that the prestige which attached itself to the Prophet's wives covering themselves in this fashion quickly gained favour with the aristocratic ladies of Arabia as a sign of a husband's high station in life and persists in all areas of the Muslim world as a demarcation between the upper and lower classes. So, unfortunately for feminists everywhere who insist on seeing the veil—and the burqa—as a sign of patriarchal dictatorship, neither is likely to disappear from the Muslim world anytime soon. Because of the prestige attached to being a "woman of cover," attempting to legislate against the veil or the burqa has about as much chance of success as would an attempt to pass a law in New York City which would forbid a woman wearing any article of clothing that costs more than twenty dollars. In other words? Forgedaboudit.]

Okay, now that you have a little better idea who Aisha is, we can return to Muhammad's last days as the fatal illness continues to sap him of his strength:

Part V

At the time of his illness, Aisha said, "The Apostle of God came walking between two men, with his head wrapped in a cloth, and he walked slowly till he entered my house. Then the Apostle fainted, and his malady became worse. He said, 'Pour seven leather bags of cold water from the well over me, that I may go out to the people, and give them my last injunctions.' So we seated him in a tub and poured water over him till he said, 'Enough! Enough!' "

The Apostle went out with his head bandaged, and sat upon the pulpit. The first words he spoke were words of prayer for those who had fallen at Uhud; for them he implored pardon and again prayed at some length. Then he said, "God has given one of His servants the choice between this world and the next, and he has chosen to be with God." Abu Bakr understood these words and knew that he meant himself; so he wept, saying, "Nay. We shall give our own lives and those of our children for thine." But the Apostle said, "Look to these doors which open into the mosque, and close them all save those which lead to the house of Abu Bakr, because I have known no better companion than he."

While the Apostle was sick the people delayed the expedition he had commanded, but he said, "Carry out the expedition to the Syrian border," and the people hastened their preparations.

He commanded the Emigrants to treat the Helpers well, saying, "Other groups increase, but the Helpers must remain the same in number and cannot increase. They were my asylum and gave me shelter. Be kind to those who are kind to them, and punish those who injure them." Then the Apostle entered his house, and the sickness overcame him so that he fainted.

The wives of the Apostle gathered to consult, and all agreed that they ought to pour medicine into his mouth. The uncle of the Apostle, al-Abbas, offered to pour it himself. When the Apostle recovered from his swoon he asked, "Who has done this to me?" and they replied, "Thy uncle!" He said, "This is a medicine brought by women from Abyssinia. Why have you done this?" Then his uncle replied, "We feared thy having pleurisy," and the Apostle said, "That is a disease with which God the most high and glorious has not afflicted me! Let no one remain in this house without swallowing some of this medicine, except my uncle." Accordingly even Maymuna swallowed some—although she was fasting at the time—because the Apostle swore that all must taste it as a punishment for what they had done to him.

According to Aisha, "When the Apostle had become very ill, he said, 'Order Abu Bakr to pray with the people!' And I replied, 'Abu Bakr is a tender-hearted man with a weak voice, and he weeps much when he reads the Koran.' But he said, 'Order him to pray with the people!' I objected only to spare my father, because I knew the people would never wish another man to stand in the Prophet's place, and would blame my father for any evil which might occur."

Speaking as someone who tries as much as possible to steer a middle course between Shia and Sunni Islam—in much the same way that I try to recognize the validity of both Protestant and Catholic Christianity—while still keeping a critical eye on the texts which support both views, I must confess that I have always found Aisha's recollections of events of the Prophet's last days…opportune (to use a charitable term for it). It seems to me of no small value to the Sunni version of events that those last conversations with the Prophet, to which only Aisha was privy within the confines of her hut, favour—so *vehemently*—the perception of the Prophet being possessed of an ardent inclination towards Aisha's father. I'm not saying it wasn't so, but my suspicions are somewhat aroused. Had the Prophet actually been that emphatic in his declaration, it seems likely to me that—not only wouldn't the sixteen-year-old Aisha have had the nerve to *object* to the Prophet's order, but that she would, in fact, have flown to the Prophet's Mosque as fast as her little sixteen-year-old feet would have carried her to have the order implemented. The *sexagenarian* Aisha, on the other hand, long grown used to her every utterance and whim being "carved in stone" in Islam (a subject on which both Shia and Sunni texts fall strangely mute, apart from acknowledging that, yes, Aisha implemented hundreds of different *shariat* laws, of which only a small percentage were not revoked after her death) would probably have remembered the episode as having occurred in just that fashion, decades after the death of both the Prophet and her father, the first Caliph.

On the Monday on which God took His Apostle he went out to the people at their morning prayers. The curtain at Aisha's door was lifted, the door opened, and the Apostle of God came out and stood in the doorway. When the Muslims caught sight of him they were almost diverted from their prayers through joy at his presence. He signalled them to continue their devotions, and smiled with pleasure as he watched them pray; never had the watchers seen him wear a more beautiful expression than then. After the prayers he addressed the people in a voice loud enough to be heard outside the door of the mosque. He said, "The fire is kindled, and confusion descends like darkness. But ye have nothing to reproach me for. I have allowed only what the Koran allows, and have forbidden what the Koran forbids." When the Apostle had finished speaking Abu Bakr said, "Apostle of God! I see thou hast risen this morning, by the favour and grace of God, in the state of health we love to see thee in!" Then the people went to their homes, satisfied that the Apostle was recovered from his illness.

But al-Abbas had said that morning to Ali, "I swear by God that I have seen death in the face of the Apostle." And he was not mistaken.

Aisha said, "When the Apostle of God returned that morning from the mosque he rested on my lap." Usama, in command of the Syrian expedition, had camped outside Medina, but when he heard the Apostle was dangerously ill he went down to Medina with his army. "When I went in to the Apostle he had already lost the power of speech and said nothing; but he lifted his hands to heaven and then again lowered them, and I knew he was praying for me."

According to Aisha, "a man of the family of Abu Bakr happened to enter with a fresh toothpick in his hand and the Apostle of God looked at it in such a way that I knew he wanted it. I asked, 'Shall I give thee this toothpick?' and he replied, 'Yes'. So I took it and chewed it until it became soft and gave it to him. He rubbed it against his teeth, more sharply than I had ever seen him do, and then he laid it down again. Then I found that he was becoming heavy in my lap, and I looked at him and saw that his eyes were turned upwards; and he said, 'Nay! Rather the companion in paradise!' I had often heard the Apostle say, 'God takes no Prophet away without giving him a choice,' and when he died his last words were, 'Rather the companion in paradise'. Then I thought, 'He has not chosen our companionship.' And I said to him, 'The choice was thine, and I swear by Him who sent thee that thou hast chosen what is right.' Then the Apostle of God died, at noon on Monday.

"The Apostle died on my *breast, despite my foolishness and youth. I placed his head on a cushion, and then I rose and began to strike my face and beat my breast with the other women."*

And then…and *then*…when I read Aisha's confession of the Prophet's last words, knowing what a toll that would exact on *any* wife—let alone a teenager who had been the undisputed favourite of God's

Last Messenger and Seal of Prophets—my faith in her is restored, at the very least to the extent of acknowledging that Aisha was a woman unlike other women, even granting her self-admitted foolishness and youth.

In the immediate aftermath of the end of the Age of Prophets:

Now Omar rose before the people and said, "Some Hypocrites say that the Apostle of God is dead! He has not died, but has departed to his Lord, just as Moses left his people for forty days, and returned to them when it was rumoured he was dead. By God! The Apostle will return just as Moses did, and the hands and feet of the men who have said that the Apostle is dead will be cut off!"

Abu Bakr arrived, and alighted at the door of the mosque while Omar was talking thus. But he took no notice, and went in to see the body of the Apostle in the house of Aisha. It was laid out and shrouded with a striped mantle. This he removed from the face of the Apostle and, kissing it, said, "Thou art to me as my father and mother! Thou hast tasted the death which God decreed for thee; but after it, no death will ever come to thee again." Then he covered the face of the Apostle and went out. He went to Omar and said, "Gently! Listen to me!" but Omar paid no attention, and continued his speech.

When Abu Bakr saw that he would not listen he himself turned to the people, who left Omar and came to him. Then he gave praise to God and said, "Let all who adored Muhammad know that Muhammad is dead, and let all who adore God know that God is eternal and never dies." Then he recited the verse "Muhammad is but an Apostle. Other Apostles have passed away before him. If he die or be slain will ye turn back? He who turns back does no injury to God; and God will surely reward those who give thanks." And it was as if the people had never heard this verse until Abu Bakr recited it then.

Omar told thereafter how "When God had caused His Apostle to die, the Helpers disagreed with the Emigrants about what should next be done, and they gathered to discuss it. I said to Abu Bakr, 'Let us go to our brethren the Helpers,' and we went, and sat down with them. Then their orator pronounced the Confession of Faith, uttered due praise to God, and said, 'We are the Helpers of God and the army of Islam, and you Emigrants are a part of us.' And they intended thus to take dominion away from us. When he ceased to speak I prepared to reply and had already thought out an oration which pleased me when Abu Bakr said, 'Gently, Omar!' And I was unwilling to anger him.

"Then he spoke and he was more learned and dignified than I. There was not a sentiment I had intended to use which he did not express in the same or even in a better way than I could have done. He said, 'Whatever good qualities you claim, you are possessed of! But the Arabs concede supremacy only to us of the Koreish, who are the centre of the Arab world by heredity and position. I propose to you one of these two men as leader and you may pay homage to whichever you prefer!' Then he took hold of my hand and that of Abu Ubayda. This was the only sentiment in his speech which displeased me, for I would rather have had my head struck off than govern over a man so great as Abu Bakr.

"Then a Helper rose and said, 'Let there be one Amir selected from the Helpers, and one from the Emigrants,' and many voices were raised and there was confusion. So, fearing dissension, I cried to Abu Bakr to stretch out his own hand and I paid him homage. Then all paid him homage."

And—evidently—in just so effortless a fashion, the succession of the Prophet was decided, not on the basis of piety, not on the basis of the close friendship to the Prophet of the would-be successor, but rather on the basis of the pre-eminence of the *Koreish,* as the centre of the Arab world by heredity and position. This is the reason, in the last instalment, that I questioned whether the merging of Islam with Mecca was the choice of the Prophet on his own or if he was directed to do so by God. I suspect the former since—as can be seen here—practically at the moment of Muhammad's death, the Koreish were again the pre-eminent concern in the Arab lands which had previously united solely (and now, it began to appear, only *ostensibly)* under the Prophet's leadership. With the first and second Caliphs, Abu Bakr and Omar, this posed no great problem, since they could claim, like Muhammad, to have a foot in both camps. They

were of Mecca and they were, likewise, of Islam. By choice, their allegiance to the latter superseded their allegiance to the former. Very shortly, however, as the succession of the Caliphs continued, this was not to be the case.

Finally, Abu Bakr spoke again. He said, "I am appointed to govern you, although I am not the best of you. If I act well you must aid me, and if I act unjustly you must correct me. Truth is faithfulness and falsehood is treachery! No nation has failed to fight for God but God has punished it with abasement; nor has wickedness become widespread without God sending calamity. Obey me as long as I obey God and His Prophet! But should I rebel against God and His Prophet you will owe me no obedience! Rise to your prayers and may God have mercy on you!"

On Tuesday, after allegiance had been paid to Abu Bakr, the people made preparations for the burial of the Apostle of God. Ali, al-Abbas and his sons al-Fadl and Qutham, with Usama and Shuqran, took it upon themselves to wash the corpse. Ali leaned the body against his own breast, while al-Abbas, al-Fadl and Qutham helped to turn him. Usama and Shuqran poured the water whilst Ali washed him. Ali said, "Thou art my father and my mother! How beautiful thou art, alive and dead!" And there was nothing distasteful, as with other dead bodies, in the corpse of the Apostle of God.

Aisha said, "When they were about to wash the Apostle, they disagreed and said, 'By God! We do not know whether we ought to strip the Apostle of God as corpses are usually stripped or whether to wash him in his clothes.' As they are discussing, God sent sleep upon them so that there was not a man among them who did not slumber; and they heard a voice which they knew not, saying, 'Wash the Prophet in his garments!' They rose and washed the Apostle of God in his shirt, pouring water over it, and rubbing it with their hands, so that the shirt was between their hands and the body." After the washing had been completed, the Apostle was wrapped in three garments.

When the body had been arranged and laid out on the couch in his own house the Muslims knew not where to bury him. One said, "Let us bury him in his mosque." Another said, "Let us bury him with his companions." And Abu Bakr said, "I have heard the Apostle of God say that every Prophet should be buried on the spot where he died." Accordingly the bed on which the Apostle had been resting was lifted up, and the grave dug under it. But there was doubt about the form of the grave.

Abu Ubayda was accustomed to dig graves plainly, according to the fashion of Mecca, but Abu Talha, the grave digger of Medina, dug them in a vaulted shape. Al-Abbas therefore called two men, and said to one of them, "Go to Abu Ubayda," and to the other, "Go to Abu Talha." He added, "God, choose for Thy Apostle." Abu Ubayda could not be found, but the man who went to Abu Talha found him and brought him; so he dug the grave of the Apostle in the Medina fashion.

Then the men entered in throngs to pray for him. When they had completed their devotions the women came in; and when they had finished the children came. Yet no one had directed the people to visit the corpse of the Apostle of God.

The Apostle of God was buried in the middle of the night on Wednesday. Aisha said, "We knew nothing about the burial of the Apostle until we heard the sound of pickaxes in the middle of the night." Those who went down into the grave of the Apostle were the same men as washed the corpse. When the Apostle had been laid in the grave and it was to be built up, his freed slave, Shuqran, took a wrapper which the Apostle had used often and worn out; and, burying it in the grave, he said, "No one shall wear it after thee." It remained interred with the Apostle.

According to Aisha, the Apostle had said when he was dying, "The curse of God is on a nation which makes the graves of its Prophets into places of worship." But, he knew that his own followers would do this.

Abu Bakr became the successor to the Prophet, Ruler of the Faithful, Shadow of God on Earth, Governor of the Messenger of God and became the first to hold these exalted titled as Caliph of Islam. Abu Bakr ruled for only two years. Not long, but long enough to launch successful military campaigns against Iran, Iraq and Byzantium.

...continued next issue

Canadian retailer dies

Harry Kremer owned longest-running Canadian store

By **Dave Sim**

Harry Kremer, owner and proprietor of *Now & Then Books* — one of the oldest comic-book stores in continuous operation in North America — died in the late evening of March 12 at age 86. His body was discovered just before midnight by a long-time friend who — having been made homeless by a December hotel fire — had been living with Harry temporarily. I have always known the friend in question only as Dave Walper because he once worked at the Walper Hotel in downtown Kitchener. This differentiated him from Dave Odeon — who worked at the Odeon Theatre (now long gone) and from myself, Dave Comic Book. "Dave was in today." "Dave Odeon?" "No Dave Comic Book." Last names weren't used much at *Now & Then Books* which Harry opened (in a short-lived partnership with Bill Johnson) in the fall of 1971 at 103 Queen Street South here in Kitchener. Rudy, Rocko, Frenchie — guys Harry knew from his days of working at the Smiles 'n' Chuckles Chocolate Factory and a hundred other places were (no other word for it) *inhabitants* of Now & Then Books.

Everyone in Kitchener, it seemed, either knew Harry or knew of Harry. He had suffered a couple of heart attacks in recent years, was diabetic, and, for a period of time was — visibly — in poor health. Everywhere I went, anytime I would meet someone at a comic-book convention who had lived in or around Kitchener for any period of time — years, months, or even weeks — the first person they would ask about was Harry. "How's Harry doing?"

The level of concern in their voice varied according to the period in which they had last seen him, whether he had been in good health or, as I said, visibly ill health. For the last couple of years he had been looking better each time I saw him and I was sure he would be around for decades yet. He had visited me at the studio just last week. He had bought (or more likely, knowing Harry, acquired in trade) two 8x10 glossies — one autographed by the Beatles and the other by the Rolling Stones. I had given him a page from "Guys" with Prince Mick and Richard George on it that he could frame with them and told him "leave it to me in your will, Harry." He brought the finished piece over and got his friend Don to take a picture of us holding it up — I had hand-lettered a dedication caption: "To Harry from the only two guys in this frame that he knows personally" and Gerhard and I had signed it. Harry pointed out that the dedication had been dated "11 September 01". One of the mindless end-of-the-issue tasks I had executed while sleepwalking through that horrific day.

He had chided me — gently, Harry always chided gently — at the store's 30th anniversary party that he had never had his picture in *Cerebus* I made a mental note to get a copy of the picture from Don and to print it on the inside front or back cover of an upcoming issue. I'm only sorry that it will be in the form of a memorial, now, instead of a pleasant surprise when Harry opened his Diamond shipment some Wednesday or other. I'm also, of course, very sorry for myself that I will no longer have his company, no longer be able to reminisce about the early, early days and the various characters we have both known in southern Ontario fandom. Roan Sutton sent him an *Elvira* piece for the store's 30th anniversary. We had both met Roan when he had co-organized the first Cosmicon at York University. Can that really be 30 years ago?

Harry was instrumental in assisting my freelance career — underwriting the cost of the two issues of the *Now & Then Times* fanzine John Bolge and I did in 1972 and 1973 and *Oktoberfest Comics* in 1976 — and was largely responsible for *Cerebus*' actual existence. Of the 2,000 copies of the first issue, he bought 500, sight unseen. The *Now & Then Books* order also represented a quarter of the circulation of #2 through #5. He was always a genuine patron of the comic-book arts. He bought all 22 pages of interior art from *Cerebus* #4 when $10 a page could only be considered a genuine act of largesse on his part.

Chester Brown just called a few minutes ago. The sadness in his gasp, when I told him the news, spoke volumes to me. Chet, I don't imagine, saw Harry on more than a dozen or so occasions, most recently when he and Joe and Seth had appeared at the store's 29th anniversary. Harry was, hands down, one of the nicest — if not *the nicest* — people I have ever known in my life and Chester and Joe and Seth responded to that niceness in the same way I saw such comic-book luminaries as Barry Windsor-Smith and Mike Kaluta and Russ Heath do (when Harry successfully bid for an hour of their respective time at the 1973 Detroit Triple Fan Fair). The same way Gene Day did when I introduced them in 1976. People *remembered* Harry — as Barry Windsor-Smith did, which pleased and surprised Harry no end — even decades after a single encounter.

Harry was *the* pioneer in comic book retailing in Southern Ontario — second only to Captain George Henderson who had opened Memory Lane in Toronto's Mirvish Village (just down the street from where The Beguiling is today) three years before.

I can't even begin to tell you how sorely he will be missed — not only in this city which he called home all of his life — but everywhere in our worldwide comic-book nation that any former Kitchener-Waterloo resident, any former *Now & Then Books* customer hears the sad news that Harry Kremer is gone — among record collectors, among science-fiction enthusiasts, among movie fans, among original art collectors, among Toronto Maple Leaf fans, among Kitchener Ranger fans, among his fellow retailers, among his friends and his family, among his fellow Canadians: the myriad lives he touched and among those whose lives touched his own.

I count it a rare privilege in my life to have been able to number myself among those people. ✦

TOP SELLING COMICS
February 2002

The following comics are the top-selling comics titles for the month of February based on retailer pre-orders through Diamond Comic Distributors. The number at right indicates the number of copies ordered in the thousands:

1	*New X-Men #124*	Marvel	112
2	*Ultimates #3*	Marvel	111
3	*Ultimate Spider-Man #20*	Marvel	87
4	*Uncanny X-Men #404*	Marvel	103
5	*Amaz. Spider-Man #41*	Marvel	100
6	*Ultimate X-Men #1*	Marvel	79
7	*GI Joe #4*	Image	79
8	*X-Force #116*	Marvel	79
9	*Green Arrow #13*	DC	76
10	*Wolverine #174*	Marvel	75
11	*Jla #64*	DC	65
12	*Avengers #52*	Marvel	57
13	*Wolverine Hulk #2*	Marvel	56
14	*Punisher #10*	Marvel	54
15	*Hawkman #1*	DC	53
16	*Daredevil #51*	Marvel	52
17	*Batman #601*	DC	52
18	*Peter Parker Spider-Man #41*	Marvel	52
19	*Fantastic Four #53*	Marvel	49
20	*Paradise X #1*	Marvel	48
21	*Spawn #120*	Image	47
22	*X-Force #126*	Marvel	47
23	*Incredible Hulk #58*	Marvel	47
24	*Ultimate Marvel Team Up #14*	Marvel	46
25	*X-Men Unlimited #34*	Marvel	45
26	*Det. Comics #768*	DC	45
27	*JSA #54*	DC	44
28	*Superman #180*	DC	42
29	*Elektra #9*	Marvel	41
30	*Iron Man #52*	Marvel	41
31	*Exiles #11*	Marvel	41
32	*Thor #47*	Marvel	39
33	*Batman Gotham Knights #37*	DC	38
34	*Blade #1*	Marvel	38
35	*Action Comics #789*	DC	37

Source: Diamond Comic Distributors

NEW COMICS shipping Mar. 31-April 6

The following information is taken from publisher and distributor solicitations and updates and is as accurate as possible at press time. Check with your local retailer to find out what day new comics go on the shelves. Comics that are delayed or rescheduled will be tracked in future *CBG Calendars*.

Note: ❶ indicates a rescheduled comic book that appeared in a previous *CBL* ...*lendar*.

Archie Comic Publications
Archie and Friends Starring Josie & Pussycats #56, $1.99
Archie Double Digest #113, $3.29
Archie's Weird Mysteries #20, $1.99
Betty #111, $1.99

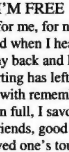
Chaos! Comics
Haunted #4 (of 4) ($2.99, spec. ed. $7.50) ($2.99, spec. ed. $7.50)

CrossGen
First #18, $2.95
Mystic #23, $2.95

Dark Horse
Art of Comic Book Inking Vol 2 TP, $14.95
Ring of The Nibelung Rhinegold & Valkyrie Vol 1 TP, $21.95
The Scorpion Ring #2 (two covers, $2.99)
Spyboy/Young Justice #3, $2.99
Zachary Holmes Case 2: The Sorcerer HC, $9.95
Oh My Goddess! Part XI #9, $2.99

DC Comics
❶ *Tom Strong Terrific Tales #3*, $2.95 (Max. 24-30)
Batgirl #27, $2.50
Batman: Legends of the Dark Knight #154, $2.25
The Crusaders #14, $2.50
Doom Patrol #7, $2.50
Green Lantern #149, $2.25
Hawkman #2, $2.50

IN MEMORY OF
Harry Kremer
June 6, 1915 ~ March 13, 2002



I'M FREE
Don't grieve for me, for now I'm free;
I took His hand when I heard Him call;
I turned my back and left it all.
If my parting has left a void;
Then fill it with remembered joy.
My life's been full, I savoured much;
Good friends, good times,
a loved one's touch.
A friendship shared, a laugh, a kiss;
Ah yes, these things, I too will miss.
Perhaps my time seemed all too brief;
Don't lengthen it now with undue grief.
Lift up your hearts and share with me;
God wanted me now,
He set me free.

Above: Letter of comment sent to *The Comics' Buyer's Guide* which they kindly printed as a lead "Current Comics" news item in issue #1481. **Right:** Epitaph handed out at Harry's funeral March 16 at St. Peter's Lutheran Church in Kitchener.

HARRY VINCENT KREMER

6 JUNE 1946

12 MARCH 2002

"Death is not a foe, but an inevitable adventure"

Harry Kremer's self-chosen epitaph

6 MARCH 02
photos
by
Don Van Horn

$3.50CANADA • $2.25USA • £1.50UK